

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1391

• • •

Chapter 1391

"Isn't she just the luckiest girl ever?"

"Does anyone know who she is, like, for real?"

"Are they, like, dating or what?"

Romeo held Arabella's hand as they made their way out, flanked by a phalanx of bodyguards.

"OMG, they're like a perfect match. I swear their love story beats any TV show romance!"

"She's so gorgeous, like, even prettier than some celebs!"

"Think they're off to grab a bite?"

Serena was in such a good mood, but all the chit-chat around her had totally killed her vibe by the time she made it to the top floor!

When Romeo had left the top floor earlier, he'd snagged a souvenir for Arabella—a tiny Emerald Tower keychain.

Now, they each had one, and Arabella couldn't help but laugh, "When did you get this? I didn't even notice!"

"While you were texting back."

Remembering, Arabella realized that she had been replying to her aunt, who had asked if she would be home for dinner. She

had told her she'd be dining out with Romeo, and in that short span, he had managed to buy the gift and surprise her.

"I really love it." Arabella threaded the key into her new keychain.

Seeing how much she cherished his gift made Romeo's mood soar even higher.

Beside the towering Emerald, there lay the Luminescent Brook, and now, Romeo had chartered a whole boat for a dinner cruise with Arabella.

The vessel's cabin was designed with clear glass, allowing them to savor a scrumptious meal while taking in the stunning views along the Luminescent Brook.

From Stellar Palace to The Emerald Tower, from The Serenity Temple to the Veteran's Retreat, the boat offered a unique charm of Oakridge City that was truly unparalleled.

Other tourists, spotting their boat bathed in cozy light, with the bow and stern decked out in vibrant marigolds, couldn't help but stare in wonder and envy.

"Why is their boat different from ours?"

"It's so much prettier! Look at how crowded our boat is, and they seem to be all alone."

"Did they, like, charter the whole thing?"

"Look at us, having to book weeks in advance, and the prices are all over the place depending on where you sit.

But they can afford a whole boat. So loaded!"

Arabella hadn't expected a simple date to be turned into such a grand affair by Romeo.

Even the starters, main course, and dessert were tailored to her tastes.

Meanwhile, Serena, at the top of the Emerald, had lost all enthusiasm, her mind fixated on the image of Romeo taking Arabella's hand and passing by her.

She gazed down at the Luminescent Brook, twinkling with lights, and wondered aloud, "What's that?"

Martin replied gently, "That's the dinner cruise along Luminescent Brook. Wanna give it a try?"

"Yeah, sure." Serena nodded.

The tourists on the ground were shocked at how extravagant the couple was, leaving not even an hour after reserving the place.

"Talk about splurging, just to enjoy the view for less than an hour. Is money just like onions to rich folks, not worth much?"

When Serena heard the surrounding envy and awe, her mood lifted a bit.

She let Martin lead her forward, not watching where she was going, just staring at the photos Martin had taken of her on the top floor.

"Look at this mess you shot, it's so bad!" Serena handed her phone to Martin.

Martin couldn't see any issue, "It looks great, your expression, the pose, and even the background."

"You made me look fat! Don't you think this angle makes me look a bit chubbier than the last one?"

Martin inspected it closely. Perhaps there was the slightest difference, but without scrutiny, it was imperceptible.

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1392

• • •

Chapter 1392

"Can't you take a joke?" Serena snapped, her irritation barely concealed.

Martin reined in his grin, finding her annoyance oddly endearing, "Sorry, my photography skills need some work.

I'll do better next time."

"Just make sure you do! And you better start learning how to take pictures like other boyfriends do for their girlfriends!"

Martin was oblivious to the complaint; instead, he latched onto the words "boyfriend" and "girlfriend".

So, in Serena's mind, she already considered him her boyfriend, right? And by default, she saw herself as his girlfriend.

With that thought, a sweet smile crept back onto Martin's face.

They had left too late, and by the time they got to the riverbank, all the private boats were gone.

Other people had booked their boat tickets weeks in advance. Serena was taken aback to learn that a single boat's pricing varied depending on whether you were at the bow, midship, or stern.

"What about sharing a boat with others?" Martin asked the attendant.

"None left either, unless someone is willing to sell their spots to you. Not just private boats, there aren't even individual seats available."

Martin hadn't anticipated the dinner cruise being such a hit. He glanced at Serena, unwilling to let her down, he haggled with other tourists and finally managed to purchase two high-priced tickets at the bow of the boat.

Serena, however, was less than thrilled. Squeezing onto a boat with so many others was beneath her, especially surrounded by ordinary couples, influencers, and families with kids. For someone of her standing to share space with others, she felt it was a blow to her dignity.

"I'm sorry you're upset, Martin said, not fully aware of the local customs. Fortunately, the dinner was high-quality enough not to give Serena any real cause for complaint.

With the noisy atmosphere around her, Serena felt irritable, but then Martin snapped a photo of her, skillfully capturing just her, the dinner, and the view without any intruders.

"Is this better?" Martin tried to lift her spirits.

"Much better," Serena admitted, scrolling through seven or eight pictures, finally starting to cheer up. But her good mood didn't last long. She noticed a beautiful glass boat gliding by, its lighting and decorations far superior to their own.

"I wonder who that guy is over there, being able to rent out an entire boat like that."

"He must be loaded, look at all those flowers. What are they called? I've seen them somewhere before."

"Are they marigolds?"

"In this chilly weather, they must've been shipped in from elsewhere, right? Maybe that girl on the boat loves them and he arranged it all for her."

"Oh my gosh, that's so romantic:

Serena's face fell at the mention of "marigolds." But when the neighboring boat passed close by, she was shocked to see Romeo feeding Arabella dinner on that boat!

His smile was full of adoration, treating Arabella as if she were the apple of his eye.

Arabella returned his smile, her gaze filled with him alone.

"That guy's really handsome and young! He looks like he's in his twenties!"

"And the girl is gorgeous too! Aren't they the couple who had the private event at the top of the skyscraper?"

"Yeah, that's them! That guy really spares no expense for his girl!"

"They're so cute together."

Some of the passengers on the boat couldn't help but tease, "Marry him! Marry him! Marry him!"

Through the glass, Arabella could vaguely hear their chants. Marry him?

What was happening?

With a smile, Romeo looked at Arabella, "Will you marry me?"

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1393

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1393

• • •

Chapter 1393

Just then, a bubbly girl called out, "If you don't marry such a great guy, I do!"

Arabella couldn't help but laugh.

Amid the continuous jeers from across the way, Romeo sent a message and booked the entire dinner service on that boat.

The people on the boat paused for a half-second when the captain announced the news, then, realizing what had happened, they erupted in cheers, wishing the couple a lifetime of happiness and hoping for the pitter-patter of little feet soon. Some even jokingly suggested they have their honeymoon right there.

Romeo looked at Arabella with a doting smile, "They seem more anxious than I am."

The teasing grew louder.

Serena's face grew gloomier by the second.

Why was she always outshone by them?

The ordinary dinner in front of her, the raucous little boat, and Martin, who always fell short compared to Romeo.

It all grated on her!

Why!

Why was Arabella always happier than her!

“Don’t mind them,’ Martin tried to soothe her, noticing her mood, “Next time I’ll plan something even better for you.”

Serena was at her wit's end, not in the mood to talk.

At that moment, another boat with transparent walls glided towards them, a violinist aboard playing a captivating tune. His gentle

gaze fell on Serena as if performing just for her.

Serena was taken aback. Could this be Martin's surprise?

The violinist's gaze made Serena increasingly certain that this must be Martin's surprise!

“Who planned this surprise?” someone wondered.

“Could it be that couple at the bow? So romantic.”

“I heard renting a boat and hiring a violinist for one song costs around one grand.”

“That's so expensive!”

Just as Serena thought she had made a comeback, nodding to the violinist on the boat, her smile froze when in the next second,

the violinist's attention moved to other passengers, nodding to each one. His boat brushed past theirs and slowly moved towards Romeo's boat.

Serena's smile completely stiffened in disbelief. Could it be that this was also a surprise from Romeo for Arabella?

"Serena, do you like the violin?"

Martin's words plunged Serena's heart into an icy abyss. The surprise wasn't for her after all.

The glass boat kept pace with Romeo's, the violinist serenading Arabella with a symphony of joy.

Many of the passengers were lost in the beautiful music, not wanting the moment to end.

"How many surprises did you prepare?" Arabella asked, surprised and yet teasing, "Isn't it exhausting to go out with me?"

Planning ahead, figuring out how to delight her, making her happy.

"Exhausted? With you by my side, I'm too happy to be tired," Romeo pulled her close, sharing the melodious music with her, "I just wish time would slow down."

Then, he could stay with her a little longer.

"Did you enjoy dinner tonight?" Romeo whispered.

"Did you go out of your way to hire a chef just for me again?" Arabella looked up and said, "You don't have to go to all that trouble

next time. When we go out, even grabbing something on the street is fine. The most important thing is that we are together"

Romeo and Arabella intertwined their fingers, his gaze filled with affection, "I just don't want to leave you with any regrets."

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1394

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1394

• • •

Chapter 1394

"We'll never have any regrets between us."

Romeo's gaze faltered for a moment, and it looked as if stars had suddenly appeared in his eyes.

"You've planned it all so well, Arabella said with a smile that could light up the night sky. "Every time I'm out with you, it's a joy, but today has been truly special."

Romeo was visibly touched, and he couldn't resist leaning down to press his lips against hers.

The violin's melody was drifting to a close, and the night sky erupted in a symphony of fireworks.

Tourists around them were gobsmacked, their faces lit up by the unexpected display. They whipped out their smartphones to capture the moment.

"What's the occasion today?"

"Is it another one of those surprise things that guy sets up for his girl?"

"That girl is so lucky to have a boyfriend who dotes on her like that."

"She must be the happiest person in the world, right?"

Arabella looked up at the fireworks, knowing without a doubt that Romeo was behind this magic.

"I never realized before how beautiful the world around me could be," Arabella remarked, her eyes following the lights above.

"Since I've been with you, I've come to appreciate these slowed-down moments. The things I never noticed before—a flower, a tree, the earth and sea—they're all so breathtaking."

"It's all about the company, Romeo said, gazing at her with adoration. "Being with you, my mood lifts, and everything looks beautiful, everything tastes amazing, and everything we do feels joyful."

"That does seem to make sense,' Arabella said, sharing a laugh with him before snuggling closer into his embrace.

Ten minutes later.

Arabella had fallen asleep in his arms.

"Bella, knowing you have someone to take care of you eases my mind' a familiar voice whispered.

Arabella stirred from her slumber only to find, standing before her, Grannie Grace.

"Grannie,' Arabella felt the tears well up immediately. She reached for her grandmother's hand, the touch so real that her tears spilled out as she choked up, "You're back!"

She hugged the elderly woman tightly, sobbing, "I was so wrong last time. I couldn't save you"

"There, there, my child, why the tears?" Grannie Grace tenderly wiped away the tears on Arabella's face, smiling warmly. "It was my time, my dear. It had nothing to do with you. I know you've been haunted by that surgery, living in guilt and pain. How can I rest in peace with you like this?"

Hearing "rest in peace," Arabella looked at her grandmother incredulously, struggling to discern if she was alive or dead. Arabella couldn't make the judgment.

"What's past is past. Life moves on, and I am at peace now. But you, my dear. I was always worried about who would look after you. Now that you have Romeo, I see he's a good lad. You will be happy with him."

Arabella's tears flowed anew.

"I can go now, knowing you'll be alright."

"No, please don't."

Arabella reached instinctively for Grannie Grace's pulse but felt nothing. She froze, realizing this might all be a dream. Was

Grannie here in her dream?

The Luminescent Brook around them turned into a foggy haze, the boat drifting through the mist, and the image of her grandmother began to fade.

"Stop blaming yourself?" the fading voice said.

"Grannie."

"Be happy."

"No, don't go." Arabella reached out, but there was nothing to grasp.

"Having a granddaughter like you makes me proud. In the next life, we'll be family again. I promise you, next time I won't leave

so soon. I want to be there to see you married off"
And with those final words, Grannie Grace dissolved completely into the mist, leaving Arabella alone with her memories and the promise of a lifetime.

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1395

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1395

• • •

Chapter 1395

The figure dissolved into a mist and slowly dispersed into the air.

Arabella couldn't grab hold of anything and burst into heartbreaking sobs right there.

"Bella, Bella' Romeo said softly, unable to bear the sight of her tear-streaked face. "Can you hear me?" Opening her tear-filled eyes, Arabella realized she was still nestled in Romeo's arms, the boat gently gliding along Luminescent

Brook, with the Emerald Tower, the surrounding buildings, and other boats all still in place.

What was missing was Grannie Grace.

It had all been a dream!

"What did you dream about?" Romeo gently wiped the tears from her eyes, his voice filled with concern.

"You kept saying 'don't go, don't leave'. Who was leaving?"

Arabella was still enveloped in profound sadness, burying her face into Romeo's chest to calm herself.

Guessing the cause of her distress, Romeo said, "Was it Grandpa Alberto, or Grannie Grace?"

Only those two could make her defenses crumble and reveal the vulnerable young girl within.

"It was Grannie."

"Did she come to see you?" he stroked her hair tenderly. "You must be worried about the surgery.

She couldn't bear to see you

so troubled, so she came to comfort you."

A fresh tear shone in Arabella's eye.

"You've done everything you could. It's not your fault. This condition has baffled medical history.

You've been amazing."

Arabella's eyes reddened once more.

"Don't cry now. Don't make Grannie Grace worry," Romeo said as he tenderly wiped her tears away. After a while, Arabella spoke, "Grannie came to praise you."

"To praise me?"

"She said you're a good man, that I'd be happy with you."

Romeo was taken aback, his eyes warming. "I promise to take care of you, to not let your grandma worry. I'll make you the happiest person."

Arabella reached out and caressed his face. It was the first time she had touched him so intimately.

Romeo covered her hand with his own, letting her explore his features while his eyes brimmed with deep affection.

Time seemed to stand still until the boat neared the shore.

Serena stormed off the boat, and Martin quickly followed her. "Serena, let me take you somewhere else to eat."

Serena was too upset to think about food.

Martin had overheard people on the boat praising Romeo and envying Arabella.

After hearing too much of it, Serena hadn't eaten a bite and couldn't wait to leave.

As they were about to get into their car, a group of bodyguards escorted Romeo and Arabella towards them.

Their car was parked nearby, and Serena saw that Romeo was driving a limited edition sports car that had made headlines—a single model costing over ten million dollars.

Then she glanced at Martin's ride, a mere luxury car worth a million or so. Compared to Romeo, it was barely in the same league.

Romeo didn't notice anyone else in the parking lot. He opened the passenger door for Arabella, securing her seatbelt, and they shared a private joke, their laughter mingling with a kiss.

Serena's heart ached. She couldn't fathom why Romeo was so enamored with Arabella, to such an extent!

After a prolonged kiss, Romeo finally released her and climbed into the driver's seat.

The multi-million dollar sports car sped off, followed by a convoy of bodyguards, leaving a cloud of exhaust in their wake.

With her mood at rock bottom, Serena got into her car with a scowl.

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1396

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1396

• • •

Chapter 1396

Half an hour had passed.

Romeos car was the first to pull up at the gate of the estate.

He got out and opened the door for Arabella, while Joyce clung to her with an unwilling embrace. "I have no idea when I'll see you again"

Arabella patted his back soothingly, "If I'm not swamped, maybe I'll give you a call."

"Really?" Romeo rarely received calls from her. In the six months they'd known each other, the calls from Arabella could be

counted on one hand.

"If I find the time, I'll call. Once everything settles down, maybe we can head back home together."

Arabella wasn't one to make such offers before, nor did she seem to care this much about his feelings.

Romeo felt a wave of comfort wash over him, his gaze soft as water, "Deal."

Just as Arabella was about to seal the agreement, Romeo's lips met hers again.

Martin, driving in the distance, caught sight of the couple kissing at the estate's entrance. He recognized the car. It was Romeo's!

Serena hadn't expected them to be at it again.

Enough. Were they deliberately trying to provoke her?

That was the last straw for Martin. He stopped the car, angrily unbuckling his seatbelt, and stormed towards Romeo with rage in his steps.

Romeo and Arabella were still locked in their kiss when a beam of headlights interrupted them. Romeo squinted at the glare, spotting a man getting out of his car and heading straight for him.

Romeo instinctively pulled Arabella behind him just in time to dodge a punch thrown by Martin.

Without missing a beat, Romeo countered with a swift punch to Martin's face.

Martin stumbled to the ground, blood trickling from the corner of his mouth.

Serena, thoroughly frightened, rushed over to help him up, exclaiming, "What are you doing!"

"Stay out of this.' Martin glared at Romeo, seemingly hell-bent on settling the score.

When Martin lunged at Romeo again, Arabella stepped forward and spoke calmly, "Let's talk this out. Brawling won't get you anywhere."

The formidable Mr. Romeo wasn't about to be bested by someone like Martin.

Even a hundred Martins combined would stand no chance against Romeo in a fight.

"Martin!" Serena grabbed his hand, not wanting him to make a further spectacle of himself.

"What a thrilling scene at the doorstep. Lucky I didn't miss it."

A leisurely voice floated from the gate.

Eunice, in a striking red gown, exuded elegance and authority. Her presence didn't diminish even among the younger generation.

"Aunt Eunice?" Serena was taken aback. She hadn't expected her aunt to be a spectator.

This could be bad. If Eunice revealed Arabella's true identity, Martin would realize that Arabella was the real Collins family

heiress, and Serena was nothing but an adopted girl without any blood ties.

With that thought, Serena felt a pang of frustration. It was all because she had been too impatient earlier, only wanting to stop

Martin from embarrassing himself.

Completely forgetting about this crucial detail!

Upon seeing Eunice, Arabella called out dutifully, "Aunt Eunice."

Martin was surprised to hear this "Aunt Eunice."

What was the deal with Romeo's new flame? Why was she also calling Serena's aunt "Aunt Eunice"?

But Eunice seemed to take it in stride, her eyes smiling, "Bringing a fight right to the doorstep, must be the fire of youth. Come inside, all of you. Have a cup of coffee to cool down."

As soon as Eunice finished speaking, the grand doors opened in a welcoming gesture.

"Ma'am:"

Romeo was about to explain, but Eunice cut him off, "From now on, we're all family. You and Bella can just call me Aunt Eunice."

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1397

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1397

• • •

Chapter 1397

Romeo couldn't believe how quickly Eunice had taken to him, looking at Arabella with a gentle light in his eyes.

"Aunt Eunice."

Eunice noted his quick adaptation and turned her gaze to Martin.

Though Martin had a multitude of questions bubbling inside, he obediently said, "Aunt Eunice."

Eunice crossed her arms over her chest, exuding the air of a matriarch, "Follow me."

Serena quickly interjected, "Aunt Eunice, Martin's hurt. I want to take him to the hospital for a check-up."

She feared that stepping into that house would expose her charade.

Eunice turned around, her profile as beautiful as ever, "What don't we have here in terms of medicine? Besides, the world's greatest doctor is right in front of you, isn't she?" Martin looked puzzled. What did she mean, the best doctor? Where?

"What, without your uncle around, my words don't carry weight, right?"

"Of course not." Serena was feeling a tad guilty.

"Thank you for the invite, Aunt Eunice." Martin didn't want to make things difficult for Serena, whispering to her, "I'm fine."

Serena wasn't really worried about his injuries; she was worried about keeping up her facade.

Eunice led the way, her figure commanding and elegant.

Serena's mind was a mess, but she steeled herself to follow.

Romeo, holding Arabella's hand, softened his gaze, "Meeting the parents already?"

"Isn't this exactly what you wanted?"

"I didn't come prepared, empty-handed." Romeo felt a bit rude.

"Aunt Eunice doesn't care much for gifts. She cares about whether you are a good guy."

"Then I'll make sure to make a good impression."

In the living room.

Eunice sat in the seat of honor, her curls and red lipstick flawless, radiating authority.

She directed the servants to serve tea, her lips curving into a smile, "Your uncle's out, and your grandpa's already gone to bed."

Arabella showed concern, "Is Grandpa's health improving?"

"Following your advice, he got his X-rays done, just as you suspected, no fractures or ligament damage.

The doctor praised your

medicine, even wanted to bulk purchase it for the hospital. I told them you made it yourself."

Martin was taken aback. It seemed Romeo's new flame had medical knowledge. She could even make her own medicine that

impressed a doctor. And she used it on her grandfather.

"Bella, the cost of making your medicine must be high, huh?" Eunice's smile grew, "The doctor said such good medicine would

fetch a high price on the market, easily a thousand or two."

"Much more." Romeo looked at Arabella tenderly, "Even ten times that wouldn't be enough to buy it"

"That popular?" Eunice laughed with approval,

"Seems the doctor didn't realize what he had, undervaluing your medicine.

"As long as grandpa is okay, that's all that matters."
Arabella finally felt relieved.

"With you here, grandpa will always bounce back."
The servants brought in tea and snacks, and Eunice instructed, "Fetch the first-aid kit."

She turned to Arabella, asking with a smile, "For Martin's condition, what medicine would be best?"
Arabella knew his injury wasn't severe, just a punch, and if it were the old her, she wouldn't have needed any medicine.

"An ice pack for the swelling, any simple analgesic will do," Arabella still offered her suggestion.

"Perfect, we've got disposable ice packs and some aspirin." Eunice pulled out these items from the first-aid kit and sent a servant to give them to Martin.

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1398

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1398

• • •

Chapter 1398

Martin thanked her and was just about to apply the ointment when he heard Eunice ask, "Serena, aren't you going to lend a hand?"

It was then Serena realized that in front of her aunt, she might seem a tad "indifferent" as Martin's girlfriend.

"No need, I've got this' Martin said gently, giving Serena a tender look. "Serena's hands are made for playing the piano."

At the mention of "playing the piano," Eunice's curiosity was piqued. "Serena, I heard from your grandpa that you won first place at your last piano competition. What sort of competition was it?"

She seemed genuinely interested.

"It was a national contest, Serena replied, her expression betraying a hint of guilt.

Romeo, seated across from them, chimed in, "It was judged by people under Bella's wing."

"Oh?" Eunice was surprised, her gaze shifting to Romeo. "What do you mean by that?"

"There's a piano competition every year in the country, and Bella is a top judge. She rarely gets involved in the judging herself.

It's usually her team that does it"

Not just Eunice, but even Martin and Serena were taken aback, especially Serena. She couldn't believe her first-place win had

been decided by people under Arabella's command!

"So Bella is?"

"Melody."

Romeo's revelation left both Eunice and Martin completely stunned.

Melody was a legend in the piano world, unmatched to this day.

She had claimed countless prestigious awards both domestically and internationally, ranked alongside Leonard as a master of the craft!

There had been a buzz in showbiz about someone offering \$10,000 for a single note, hoping to commission Melody to compose a custom piece, but she had declined. Her reason was simple: she didn't need the money.

She was too busy!

Eunice was also a fan of Melody's piano compositions and had never imagined that the piano maestro she adored was none other than her niece!

What was more, she knew Jasmine, the president of the Piano Association back home. Jasmine was a highly accomplished pianist herself, having won numerous awards from a young age. She always praised Melody, claiming her skills surpassed her own, even considerably.

And now, to think that Jasmine held in such high regard was her own niece, Bella!

Eunice could barely contain her excitement and joy, instantly becoming a fangirl. "You're Melody? I love your compositions!"

Martin was dumbfounded. He knew full well how skilled Melody was at the piano, but the young woman before him was just in her twenties. How could she possibly be Melody? Yet if she wasn't, why would Romeo lie in front of his aunt.

What puzzled him even more was that Eunice and Arabella seemed to be family, yet not quite. Eunice didn't even know she was

Melody, but she still called her "Aunt Eunice".

What on earth was going on?

"My niece turns out to be a piano master of such talent and adoration," Eunice gushed, lavishing praise. "This is such a surprise for me. Your uncle and grandfather would be so proud if they knew."

Serena had known about Arabella's alter ego as Melody, but she hadn't expected that on her first time bringing her boyfriend home to meet her aunt, the entire time would be spent in admiration of Arabella. Praising her medical expertise, her artistic talent.

They were completely forgotten, reduced to mere backdrop!

"We'll have to have you play a couple of pieces for me later!"

Arabella couldn't help but smile at her aunt's enthusiasm. "Of course."

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1399

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1399

• • •

Chapter 1399

"Fantastic!" Aunt Eunice beamed, her smile so wide it looked like her face might split in two. "Then, I won't hold back. Oh, I'm just so fond of you!"

Realizing she might have gotten a tad too excited, especially with Martin and Serena around, Eunice cleared her throat and regained her composure. "Now, my dear nephews-in-law, you haven't told me, what was the misunderstanding about? And what's this I hear about a scuffle right on your own doorstep?"

Romeos piercing gaze shifted to Martin.

"Before we delve into that; Martin began, with a hint of hesitation, "may I be so bold as to ask who this is?" His eyes moved to Arabella.

Eunice's eyes widened in surprise, glancing between Martin and Serena in confusion. "What's the matter?"

Serena, haven't you introduced your sister to your boyfriend?"

Serena's face drained of color, the inevitable confrontation she dreaded was unfolding before her. She attempted a reassuring smile, but it faltered and failed. Eunice immediately sensed something was amiss.

"This is Arabella, the Collins family's prized gem, my very own niece,' Eunice introduced with a touch of pride.

At the mention of "niece," Martin looked startled, his gaze lingering thoughtfully.

"Eighteen years ago, there was a mix-up at the hospital when it caught fire. Louisa took the wrong child home, mistaking Serena for Bella."

Martin turned to look at the girl beside him, bewildered as to why she never mentioned any of this.

"Bella was found just six months ago. Since Serena's parents were nowhere to be found, the Collins family took her in. Since then, Bella has been considered the elder sister, and she, the younger."

Serena's pride and self-respect crumbled as Eunice narrated the tale, leaving her utterly defeated. She could feel Martin's astonished and incredulous gaze on her, but she dared not meet his eyes.

Was Martin now weighing whether a girl of such humble origins was worth staying with?

The Cooper family might not match the McMillians' status, but they were head and shoulders above the average family.

If she couldn't even hold on to Martin's heart...

What hope did she have of securing the affections of any wealthy suitor with her lowly beginnings?

"So, the engagement has been transferred to Arabella, the elder sister"

Serena's forced use of "sister" meant Martin too had to afford the same respect, but his tone revealed his shock.

Serena had never mentioned any of this before!

Romeo, who had been silent across the table, finally spoke up. "Before Bella returned to this household, my encounters with

Serena were few and far between. I originally came here to call off our engagement, but upon seeing Bella, and recalling our

past connection, I realized my fondness for her.

That's the only reason the engagement between our families wasn't terminated."

Eunice was taken aback by this revelation. Romeo was ready to disregard years of family friendship over the engagement to

Serena.

It was clear proof that he harbored no romantic feelings for Serena!

From the beginning, he genuinely did not care for her!

Martin was again so shocked he found himself speechless, staring at the girl beside him, unable to reconcile the image she had painted of Romeo's affections with reality.

Could it all have been lies?

"Serena, Martin is your boyfriend. How could you keep such matters from him?" Aunt Eunice chided from the head of the table.

"Aren't you two supposed to be the closest of confidants?"

Serena was at a loss, her mind a blank slate, unable to muster a single word in her defense.

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·

Chapter 1400

fl

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1400

• • •

Chapter 1400

Martin stepped forward, the epitome of contrition.

"This isn't on Serena, it's my fault for not asking the right questions."

Serena's eyes lifted in disbelief, her heart swelling in her chest. The boy beside her, still standing up for her even now.

Emotions swirled in her gaze, a cocktail of gratitude and shock.

Her nose tingled, and she was a blink away from tears.

"I'm sorry,' Martin said, turning to Romeo with a bow of his head, a gentleman's apology. "I thought you were being fickle, flaunting your new flame in front of Serena just to hurt her."

At those words, Romec's brow raised. Flaunting? His and Bella's affection was genuine, no show needed.

"Especially after bumping into you several times today, I assumed you were trying to make Serena feel small.

Plus, I was clueless that Arabella was a Collins, and that your engagement to her was a given. Seeing you outside Aunt Eunice's place, I thought you were there to rub it in Serena's face."

That was why he had stepped out of the car, ready to throw a punch, feeling they had crossed a line.

"I figured as much; Arabella said, having anticipated this. That was why she had kindly warned him he was no match for Romeo, and picking a fight wouldn't end well for him.

Martin hadn't expected the girl before him to be so understanding. He bowed again, more earnestly this time.

"I'm sorry for the misunderstanding."

"No harm done. You took a hit from Romeo, so let's call it even' Arabella said, noticing the swelling on his face, a clear sign

Romeo didn't pull his punches. In this round, they had the upper hand on Martin.

"Please, have a seat,' Eunice gestured for Martin to join them. "Now that we've cleared the air, let's move on.

Your granddad and uncle aren't here today, and I apologize if I haven't played the hostess well. The tea's getting cold, and the pastries won't taste as good."

They each picked up a treat, lost in thought.

Eunice's phone rang. It was one of her associates.
"Excuse me, I need to take this."

As Eunice stepped away to take the call, Martin's gaze drifted back to Serena, sizing her up, or perhaps reassessing.

Serena didn't respond, didn't even meet his eyes for a fleeting second.

Meanwhile, Romeo and Arabella shared a tender smile, their eyes filled with unspoken affection.

"Alright, I'll be there soon' Eunice said after hanging up, smiling apologetically. "Sorry, I've got to handle something urgent. Make

yourselves at home. It's your place too. Bella, Serena, while it's still early, why don't you show your partners around? I'll have to excuse myself."

"Aunt Eunice,' Arabella began, wondering if her help was needed.

Eunice patted her head as she passed, reassuring her. "Don't worry, I've got this."

Comforted, Arabella nodded. "Come back soon."

"I will" Eunice said, then turned to Romeo with a satisfied look. "Keep Bella company: "will do."

No sooner had Eunice left than Serena dashed through another door, heading straight for the garden.

"Serena!" Martin called after her, hurrying to catch up.

Romeo, embracing the girl in front of him, whispered tenderly, "Aunt Eunice said to show me around. I'd love to see your room."

"Who invites someone straight to their room?"

Arabella teased, wrapping her arms around his waist in response to his embrace.

"The room holds the essence of you. I want to see what your everyday life is like."

"You've seen my everyday life. Are you pretending we haven't shared the same room before?"

Her words drew him closer, his voice deepening.

"You're getting quite the flirt, aren't you?"

Arabella was puzzled: How had she flirted with him?

"The fire you've started. Aren't you going to put it out?" Romeo chuckled lowly, his gaze on her filled with adoration.

In the background, the staff melted into puddles of envy at the display of affection.

• • •

(0)

0/255

Send ·