

# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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"Grandpa."

"Enough, don't you dare refuse! Otherwise, I will get mad. You know I haven't fully recovered." Darren said, breaking into a feigned cough for emphasis.

But Arabella was no fool. She could see right through his act.

"Your uncles have their own businesses. They're set for life. When i pass on, everything will go to you. If you're shying away from a small token now, what will you do later? Just hand it over to someone else?"

"Grandpa."

"Our family owes you so much already. Consider this a chance for me to make it up to you."

Darren said this and coughed deliberately once more, waving his hands dismissively, "No more talk, I'm out of breath. I need to go in and rest.

Holding the wooden box in her arms, Arabella watched her grandfather's retreating figure, filled with a mix of amusement and affection.

"I've caught wind that Calvin and Arlen are selling their properties, some at half price, just to gather more cash to take with them."

Eunice had long been aware of their intentions, speaking coolly, "Because Dad gave them only two days, they're rushing to liquidate. They need a buyer to pay in full, immediately transfer the money into their accounts. I applied some pressure, so no one dared buy their stuff. Then I got some people to push down their prices even further. In the end, I bought the two most valuable mansions and a string of shops in the town center at a bargain. The rest, if they couldn't sell, would have to be put under Dad's name when the time was up."

On hearing this, Serena realized that the wooden box, which Grandpa had insisted Arabella take in the garden, contained the

unsold houses, shop keys, and luxury car keys of her relatives.

A wave of jealousy surged through Serena's heart! They had already rewarded Arabella with close to ten million dollars, wasn't that enough? And now she was getting more?

What about her?

Did she get anything?

Didn't anyone care about how she felt?

At that moment, watching Arabella carry the wooden box upstairs, Serena felt a murderous jealousy.

Even though her grandparents had just proclaimed fairness in front of everyone, their favoritism was now blatantly obvious!

"Serena, Serena? Are you listening to me?"

Eunice's voice snapped Serena back to reality, and she offered a strained smile, "Aunt Eunice, what were you saying?"

"Go upstairs and change. I bought some new clothes for your grandma, take her to try them on. We'll meet in the living room in about half an hour."

"Okay.

Serena couldn't remember how she made it back to her room, only that she had passed by Arabella's room and noticed it was larger and more beautiful than hers.

Maybe it was the sting of pride that led her to take out her phone and dial a familiar number almost subconsciously.

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Back at the office, Martin found his company's VP Steve, looking like a deer caught in headlights. The man was visibly drenched in sweat and seemed to sigh in relief upon seeing Martin as if he was the answer to his prayers. "Mr. Martin, thank goodness you're here!"

Standing in front of Florence, the vice president was so frightened he barely dared to breathe, let alone move. He stood there, bent over, looking as if he was about to have a panic attack.

Refreshments had been served, coffee and pastries, but Florence hadn't touched a thing. She sat on the couch with an icy demeanor, stone-faced and silent, as if she had been seething for hours.

Diana was there too, sitting off to the side, completely ignoring Steve. When she saw Martin walk in, she rolled her eyes at her own brother.

"Steve, you can leave us," Martin said, and the VP shot him a look of sheer gratitude, as if Martin had just offered him a lifeline out of a treacherous sea.

As soon as the office door closed behind Steve, Florence tossed a video onto the desk — it was footage of Serena berating a sales clerk on Rodeo Drive.

After Martin watched it, Florence recounted the incident on Rodeo Drive and another encounter with Serena at QY.

"I've never seen such vulgar behavior from a lady," she said with disbelief.

Serena's actions were beyond shocking to her!

And to top it off, this was the woman her son had spent six long years pursuing.

"Let me make myself clear, Martin. You can date her for fun, but if you think about marrying her, I will never allow it," Florence asserted with her usual ferocity. "If you dare have a wedding with her, I'll jump into Luminescent Brook on your wedding day. You know I always mean what I say."

"Mom." Martin hadn't expected his mother to be so adamantly opposed to Serena, to the point of threatening her own life.

He knew his mother well. She never made empty threats.

"If you don't mind losing your mother, then go ahead, defy me!"

"Mom, Serena isn't what you think," Martin defended, although even he had to admit that Serena's behavior in the video was quite rude. But it wasn't enough to warrant such disgust from his mother.

He looked at his sister.

"It's exactly as I said. If Serena hadn't acted like that, there would be nothing to discuss. But she did, and it was bizarre."

Martin knew his sister harbored a strong dislike for Serena, but he had not anticipated her to actually involve their mother.

"Our family is going through trying times, Martin. With a weak link like her, our downfall is inevitable! I will not let some girl drag our entire family into the abyss! We've been laying low for years, just for this moment. Her presence is like a bomb, ready to destroy all our years of hard work!"

"Mom, I can handle it,' Martin assured her seriously. "Whether it's our family business or my relationship with her, I'll manage both"

"One cannot have it all" Florence countered with a wisdom born of experience. "You can't have your cake and eat it too. Especially not with a woman who's not fit to stand by our side. The Cooper family doesn't need her. If you don't mind cutting ties with us, if you don't mind us becoming strangers, if you don't mind burying your own mother, then do as you please.

But let me be clear: you only get one chance."

After her speech, Florence picked up her purse and headed for the door, her high heels clicking sharply against the floor.

"Mom!" Martin stepped in front of her. "Let me arrange a meeting between you and Serena. Talk to her. You'll see she has many good qualities."

"Face-to-face with her? To watch her put on an act?" Florence scoffed dismissively and brushed past her son. "Don't ever mention her name in front of me again." Martin's mother had a point. He had built his own empire and didn't need the family money. But the thought of Serena splurging without a care in the world - that was something he still had to consider.

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Florence couldn't control her son with money, nor could she let the world know their family was at odds over a woman. So, aside from threatening to take her own life, she felt her only option was to sever ties.

Martin watched his mother's resolute figure disappear into the distance, then turned to Diana, "Diana, you just don't get Serena.

She's genuinely easygoing. At school, everyone says she's kind-hearted and sensible. Sure, she can be a bit moody at times, but nothing serious. I have no issues with her."

"Have you been brainwashed or something? You see a freak show, and you treasure it? This is eye-opening for me! Let me be

blunt, if you marry her and

Mom decides to jump in the river, I'll be there playing music and parading her body to your wedding venue. I'll give Mom a proper send-off and then slash my wrists!"

Martin was shocked his sister would resort to threats, "Can't you just meet her, get to know her properly?"

"Are you naive? Sometimes, what you see is just a facade, a deliberate act for you! The real her is the one shouting at the sales

clerks! I'd rather turn a blind eye than let her into our home and turn it upside down!"

Diana stood up, her heart hardened, "If it's her you choose, then consider me no longer your sister!"

Martin still wanted to reason with her.

"Oh, and tell her to watch herself. If she crosses me, I won't be so forgiving!"

With those words, Diana stormed out, slamming the door behind her.

Martin stood there, feeling helpless, when his phone pinged with a message from Serena.

[Going out for dinner with Grandma and Grandpa today. Let's reschedule our date]

She ended the message with a kiss emoji.

Suddenly, Martin felt all the negativity dissipate. He replied, (Sure, have fun.)

JY Sky Restaurant.

Upon hearing that the big boss Bard was coming for a meal, the restaurant manager had cleared out the best private room with a view and gave it a fresh setup.

Arabella, led by her grandmother, noticed the opulence of the room immediately—it spanned over 2,000 square feet and even

included a beautiful terrace with a stunning view.

"Mr. Darren, Mrs. Belinda." The manager greeted everyone, "Boss, Ma'am, Miss Serena."

When it came to Arabella, he couldn't recall her name and looked apologetically at Eunice.

"This is my niece, Arabella Collins;' Eunice introduced her formally, "In the future, treat her as you would us."

The manager was taken aback, but quickly replied respectfully, "Miss Bella, it's your first time here. If there's anything you need, just ask for me."

"Thank you,' Arabella said with a gentle smile.

The manager noticed that from start to finish, Eunice and Belinda were holding Arabella's hand, indicating a deep affection for her.

Who exactly was Miss Bella? She was a new face, suddenly announced as Eunice's niece. And she bore the surname Collins.

What was the story here?

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Eunice leaned in toward the manager with a conspiratorial smile. "Bring out all the dishes my folks love, would you? And toss in a few extra, for good measure." She added a few of Arabella and Serena's favorites into the mix without missing a beat.

Serena shot Arabella a smug look that seemed to scream. She thought, "Aunt Eunice ordered four dishes for you and four for me. In her eyes, we're equals"

Meanwhile, Arabella was engrossed in her phone, thumbing through messages without so much as a glance in Serena's direction.

But Serena was basking in her moment of triumph. On the patio, she snapped a few selfies before calling out, "Grandma, Grandpa, come take a couple of photos with me, will you?"

Darren and Belinda were deep in conversation, but at the beckon of their granddaughter, they paused their chat to brave the chill and pose for a few shots.

Serena then turned her attention to her uncle and aunt. "Uncle Bard, Aunt

Eunice, how about a few snaps with me as well?"

Eunice, while pouring Belinda another cup of tea, feigned annoyance. "Calling everyone but your sister, someone might think you're doing it on purpose."

Serena chuckled nervously, "Oh, no way! I was saving the best for last to take photos with her.

Besides, Arabella wouldn't overthink it, right?"

She sought Arabella's eyes, only to find her still busily tapping away on her phone, oblivious to the world around her.

"Let's just take photos inside where it's warm,'

Eunice suggested, refilling Darren's cup.

"Absolutely, indoors is better' Darren agreed, shifting his chair to Arabella's left. "Bella, let's take a few pictures, shall we?"

"Absolutely, I've had my turn with Serena, now it's Bella's turn' Belinda chimed in, scooting her chair to Arabella's right.

Arabella put her phone down and opened a financial report, only to have

Darren and Belinda crane their necks to take a peek. They were astounded.

"Bella, you understand French? And these are financial reports? You're working with Dawnstar?" Darren asked, incredulous.

"Just a small company I'm involved with, Arabella replied casually.

The moment the words left her lips, Eunice, who had been peering over, caught sight of the corporate seal on the financial report.

"Bella, what's your role at Ar-BI-Clear Group?" Eunice asked, genuinely surprised. Understanding financial reports suggested a role no less than that of a general manager.

"I'm in charge," Arabella stated plainly.

"Did you found Ar-BI-Clear Group?"

"Yes!

The revelation sent waves of surprise through everyone present.

"Ar-BI-Clear Group is a well-known skincare brand here in Dawnstar. I took notice of it a year ago but had no idea it was your venture." Bard praised, amazed. "We knew you were fluent in French, but we had no clue you were an entrepreneur here."

"And to think May always raved about your skincare products. So you're the brain behind Ar-BI-Clear Group?" Belinda asked, her voice tinged with disbelief.

"The primary line, yes."

Ar-BI-Clear Group's flagship products were known for their magical effects on troubled skin—acne disappearing, pores shrinking, blackheads vanishing, leaving the skin smooth and fair.

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But all the other lines were developed by her company's research and development teams, as she owned so many companies, she couldn't possibly attend to them all.

"Wow, that's damn impressive." The crowd erupted in awe, completely taken aback by how outstanding this girl was at such a young age.

Serena watched as everyone circled Arabella, with Eunice even snapping photos of her with their grandparents on her smartphone. A twinge of jealousy pinched at her heart, but she kept up her smile, "Let's take a big family picture later, shall we?"

I'm going to step outside to capture some shots of the night view!"

There was another large terrace at the end of the corridor, not only offering a view of Bard's eco-resort and golf course but also the city lights twinkling in the distance.

After a while, Serena returned, her eyes glued to her phone as she edited the photos, not forgetting to coax her aunt with a sweet voice, "Do you think this one looks good? Is the lighting okay in that one?"

"You've overdone it with the filters, it looks unnatural," Eunice commented honestly, "This one won't do, your eyes look too



purposeful, the smile seems fake. This one isn't flattering either. Your chin looks too sharp. This one's not good either. You're trying too hard to look cute. All these pouting selfies, you're overdoing it. It's not attractive"

Out of the more than twenty pictures Serena took, Eunice only complimented one landscape shot capturing the eco-resort and golf course.

At that moment, the restaurant manager came out to serve the dishes personally.

One by one, the mouthwatering dishes were presented on the table, with the restaurant manager respectfully introducing each one before bowing out.

Arabella started serving the elders with the cutlery, and Serena, keen to follow suit, noticed Arabella reaching for a piece of fish to place in Belinda's bowl. She quickly intercepted with a larger piece, placing it in the bowl first.

"Grandma, this is your favorite fish. Have some more,' Serena said purposefully, stealing the words right out of Arabella's mouth.

As Arabella reached for the beef, Serena hurriedly did the same.

After her little display, she suggested, "Let's all raise a toast! First, to celebrate our grandparents' health, second, to welcome

Aunt Eunice home safely, and third, to celebrate my sister's return to the family"

Seeing Serena finally acting sensibly, Eunice joined in, lifting her glass, "Shall we all clink glasses?"

Arabella raised her glass of lemon water to join the toast, but just as she was about to sip, she noticed something off about the floaters.

Though there were fine bits of lemon pulp, a closer look revealed tiny specks of powder floating and slowly dissolving in the water.

She was a regular lemon water drinker, so even the slightest difference didn't escape her notice.

She sniffed, catching the usual scent of lemon water. Could the person who spiked her drink have used something colorless and tasteless?

Everyone else had already downed their lemon water, but Arabella noticed no powder floating in their glasses.

"Bella, why aren't you drinking? Lemon water is so refreshing, especially after eating too much meat."

Serena's voice brought Arabella back from her thoughts.

"I was just thinking. does my sudden return to the family unsettle you?"

Caught off guard by Arabella's unexpected question, Serena stumbled for a moment before laughing, "Why would it? This has always been your home. I'm just grateful you're letting me stay" "And if the family started treating me twice as well, compensating me, giving me more than they give you, you wouldn't mind?" "Of—of course not." Serena was baffled by Arabella's comments. Could Arabella have sensed something was amiss? No, it couldn't be. Martha had assured her the drug was colorless and tasteless, dissolving completely in water in less than a minute.

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As the waitress brought in the drinks, Serena hardly noticed any difference between Arabella's glass and the others.

Arabella remained silent, deep in thought, which only made Serena more uneasy.

The atmosphere grew awkward, and Serena tried to break the tension with a nervous laugh. "Bella, no matter how much our

family gives you, it's yours by right. You're a part of this household" she said, her voice edging towards sincerity. "On the other

hand, I'm not related by blood, so every gift, every token of appreciation I receive is a stroke of fuck, a blessing. I'm too grateful

to ever resent you for having more, or better. How could I?"

Perhaps sensing disbelief in the room, Serena added gently, "For the past eighteen years, the Collins family has been nothing

but kind to me. Their love has moved me beyond words. I've received more warmth and happiness than I could ever claim as my own. I'm content."

"Really?"

Arabella's response prompted Serena to nod emphatically. "Absolutely."

"Then let's toast," Arabella said, standing up and pushing her suspicious lemonade towards Serena.

"Sharing my drink with you

symbolizes that from now on, in this family, I'll always think of you, my sister, and share everything with you. Even if it's just a

glass of water, I'll make sure you're taken care of"

"Bella" Serena felt a rush of panic.

Arabella poured herself a new drink and clinked it against the problematic glass on the table. "Here's to you," she said, and

without hesitation, downed her lemonade in one go.

Serena's face twisted in distress. Did Arabella realize something was wrong with the drink and was deliberately letting her have

it?

Impossible. Martha had assured her the drug was colorless, tasteless, undetectable even to the divine. Was Arabella just naturally suspicious, or was she genuinely trying to make amends?

But she couldn't drink that lemonade. If she did, she'd be the one to suffer.

Arabella turned her empty glass upside down as if to show she'd finished, signaling it was Serena's turn.

"You always take care of me, even willing to give up your drink for me,"

Serena said, reaching for her own glass.

But Arabella intercepted, picking up the tainted glass and pressing it to Serena's lips. "If I'm giving it to

you, it's because you deserve to be my sister.

If you refuse, does that mean you don't see me as family?"

Serena had never seen Arabella play such a cunning game and frantically tried to explain,

"You've got it all wrong.

"Just drink it, Arabella interrupted. "It's getting cold, and I wouldn't want you to have a stomachache.

That would weigh on my conscience."

Arabella's insistence left Serena cornered.

Eunice, watching from the side, sensed something was amiss. Although she didn't believe Serena

capable of poisoning the

drink, Arabella wasn't one to be so pushy without reason.

There must be something wrong with that glass, which was why Arabella was insistent on Serena drinking it.

"Serena, if it's a gesture from your sister, you should accept it," Eunice prodded, curious to see if there was truly something amiss with the lemonade.

"But Aunt Eunice. As the younger sister, I really shouldn't be competing with her, even over a glass of water."

The truth was, drinking it could spell disaster for her.

"By offering it to you, she's showing she accepts you as family, willing to share her fortunes and face hardships together. If you don't drink, does that mean all your earlier words were just empty pleasantries?"

Hearing Eunice's words, Serena felt tears welling up.

"Of course not."

Bard, standing off to the side, observed his wife's strange behavior. Could there really be something wrong with the water?

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Darren and Belinda were baffled by the whole charade over a simple glass of water.

"If Serena is bothered by my presence, upset that I got more presents than you, then I'll just go back and tell Mom and Dad"

Serena was stuck between a rock and a hard place and, finally, she mustered up the courage to take a tiny sip.

Eunice playfully scolded, "Your sister drained her glass, and you're just taking a wee nip? That's hardly in the spirit."

When Serena picked up the glass again, a mischievous idea struck her, and she pretended to fumble it.

The cup seemed destined to fall from her hand.



Serena was about to celebrate her sly move, but lo and behold, in the next second, Arabella reached out and caught it, saying,

"Lucky, it didn't spill"

Now, Serena felt like sinking into the ground.

"You two, fussing over a glass of water, Darren chimed in, his eyes on a heaping spoonful of creamy crab dip—the kind he

adored. To savor a mouthful was pure bliss!

Belinda, worried the food might get cold, smiled and said, "Sweetie, just drink up when your sister offers a gesture of kindness. In

this family, there's no need for all this polite deflection."

With no way out, Serena swallowed the small cup of lemon water, holding back tears.

Martha had mentioned the effects would kick in after an hour, so Serena didn't lose her cool right away.

She managed to smile

sweetly and exchange pleasantries.

However, after nibbling at her meal for a bit, she couldn't hold back any longer and snuck a message to Martha, querying what on earth she should do.

Martha was now beside herself with worry!

After all, she had pulled several strings to get this drug, which was notorious for having no antidote!

Her plan was to use it on Arabella, to make even the best doctor suffer through 12 hours of agony without a cure.

But she never imagined it would backfire on Serena! [Don't panic, I will find a way, trust me!] she texted back.

The meal was torture for Serena, who sat there distracted. After an agonizing fifty-five minutes, she finally got Martha's reply: No antidote.

Despair engulfed her.

As dinner wound down, Serena suggested everyone head off to rest. But on the drive, she felt the urgent need to find a bathroom.

And it didn't stop there. Hallucinations started to kick in. She was riding in her uncle's luxury car, yet she saw everyone sitting on a giant, edible mushroom.

Yes, the kind you eat, only enormous.

And floating.

"Serena, what's wrong?" Eunice noticed her discomfort and asked gently.

"I'm fine. It's just a sudden stomachache, I need a bathroom." Serena was struggling to hold on.

"Maybe it's the raw fish we had, a bit of indigestion?"

Darren said, rubbing his stomach that had also started to grumble.

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"Step on it" Eunice whispered to the driver with an urgency that belied her calm voice.

Even with the speedometer pushing 75, Serena felt like they were crawling, each second stretching into an eternity.

The thing about this 'medicine' was its sneaky effect—it bode its time before hitting you with an unbearable urgency.

Finally reaching the villa, Serena burst out of the car, not sparing a moment for anything else.

"Did the child eat something off? Do we need to?" Belinda's words were cut short by an odor so foul it seemed to punch her directly in the brain.

Serena's gas was so potent that Belinda caught a whiff the moment she stepped out of the car.

Belinda, ever the epitome of grace, couldn't help but retch ungracefully, nearly fainting from the stench.

"Honey." Darren had just gotten out of the car when the smell hit him, nearly knocking him out cold.

Feeling the pressure mounting, Serena dashed toward the main house, but the path ahead seemed to turn into stairs made of clouds. Besieged by hallucinations, she couldn't seem to reach the end.

"Serena, Serena?"

May had heard the matriarch was back and was coming to greet her, only to step out and find Serena running in place in front of

a tree. Was this some new form of exercise?

Hadn't Serena gone out to dine with Belinda? Why was she exercising upon returning, and in such an odd stance and with that bizarre expression?

Serena heard a fantastical voice and looked up to see a giant octopus greeting her, its puzzled eyes seemingly questioning her actions.

Maybe out of shock, Serena instinctively swung her handbag hard at May.

It was as if she was battling the giant cephalopod. May screamed, completely dumbstruck, "Serena?" Had Serena lost her mind?

Why did she look so utterly bizarre?

Pushing past the 'giant octopus, Serena continued her run, encountering numerous 'large creatures' along the way.

Even though she knew these were just hallucinations from the drug, she couldn't help being startled time and again—crashing into vases being polished by the staff, tripping over ottomans, tumbling down the spiral staircase.

Everyone was stunned by her actions, unable to believe their eyes for a moment before stepping forward to help her.

But to Serena, their approach felt like a pack of terrifying beasts closing in.

She waved them off in panic, "Don't touch me. I just had a bit too much to drink, back off, all of you!"

That was when she noticed her hand morphing into a monstrous claw, grotesque and ferocious.

She looked at it in horror, disbelief in her voice, "What's happened to my hand?"

Everyone was confused; Serena's hand was perfectly fine. What was going on with her?

Still unsettled, Serena raced upstairs, her stomach growling ominously.

Guided by memory, she made a beeline for her room.

Arabella had just stepped into the garden when she heard the staff exclaiming, "Is that Serena? Why is she squatting on Ms.

Bella's balcony?

What is she doing?"

One might think she was relieving herself, but her pants were still on.

Yet, if she wasn't, then her posture was terribly misleading.

What on earth was happening?

Arabella went upstairs and into her room, only to catch sight of Serena squatting on her balcony in a most compromising position.

This was a classic case of biting off more than one could chew.

Serena's stomach was making a racket, the sensation of urgency was overwhelming, yet nothing was happening.

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The agony twisted through her gut, an unrelenting torment.

"Get out"

Arabella's icy voice snapped Serena to attention, her startled eyes locking onto the frosty figure that seemed to have materialized from a fairytale.

To Serena, Arabella was the spitting image of the Snow Queen from the children's stories.

Yet again, Serena realized she had stumbled into the wrong scene. She retorted with annoyance,

"Who let you barge in? Don't you see I'm using the loo?"

"This is my balcony; Arabella stated flatly, "Get out" She wasn't about to allow someone to relieve themselves on her balcony.

"You're the one who should leave! I'm not going anywhere until I'm done!"

Serena was clueless about who had intruded, but as far as she was concerned, this was her bathroom, and she was going to use it!

"I'm counting to three." Arabella's patience was thinning, "One, two."

With her stomach in knots, Serena protested, "I'm going to do it right here! It's almost done"

Without another word, Arabella yanked her out.

"What are you doing? I need to use the bathroom, and if you're desperate, you'll just have to wait your turn." Serena struggled wildly, even attempting to hit Arabella.

Finally, Arabella's patience snapped. She booted Serena out the door and slammed it shut.

Serena landed with a thud, dazed on the floor for a moment until a servant hurried upstairs, drawn by the commotion.

"Serena, what happened to you?"

She had heard a crash from upstairs that sounded like someone had knocked over a vase. Upon investigation, she found Serena on the floor.

Once again, Serena saw a talking starfish and knew she was hallucinating.



She managed to choke out, "Take me back to my room. I need the loo."

"Oh, okay." The servant supported her on the way to the bathroom, grimacing at the repeated wafts of foul odor. She was nearly suffocated by the stench.

Finally reaching the restroom, Serena just couldn't go, no matter how hard she tried. After forty torturous minutes on the toilet, she had no choice but to call for help.

"What do you take for non-stop farting?" Serena inquired of the enormous turtle before her.

"You might need..." The servant was cut off mid-sentence by an overpowering stench and, covering her nose, apologized, "Apart from the farting, are there any other symptoms, Serena?"

"My stomach hurts, and I can't go: "Could it be indigestion? I'll fetch some antacids." The servant hurried off to get the medication.

After taking two pills, Serena ended up in the bathroom, doubled over in agony.

The medicine acted like a laxative, leaving her spent and weak at the knees.

In the living room.

Eunice, seeing a flurry of servants rush downstairs, couldn't help but ask, "What's going on?"

"It's Serena. Her farts are just unbearable."

They didn't want to be rude, but they had nowhere else to turn!

The entire hallway reeked of an indescribable odor.

"Serena's stomach still hasn't settled?" Darren was surprised. His own stomach had grumbled in the car, but it had settled

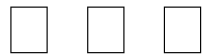
quickly after getting out, "Should we have someone look at her?"

"I've already given her antacids."

"That's good." Darren looked up and inquired,

"Eunice, where were we?"

"We were talking about Bella's flancé, Romeo."



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Chapter 1430

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# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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## Chapter 1430

Eunice was all praise for Romeo, her words glowing with pride.

Darren, itching with curiosity, chimed in, "It's just 8 o'clock sharp. Why don't we invite Romeo over for a bit, maybe offer him a warm cup of tea?"

"Dad, do you want to meet him?"

Just after Eunice finished his words, Belinda exclaimed, "I'd like to meet him too."

"Let me check with Bella and see if Romeo is free."

Eunice texted Arabella.

Arabella quickly learned that Romeo was nearby and asked him to come over.

As Romeo pulled up to the estate, Martin's car arrived shortly after.

The two men exchanged a glance, both with a shadow crossing their eyes.

Eunice went out to greet Romeo and, spotting Martin, she expressed surprise, "Are you here for Serena?"

"I texted Serena, called her, but got no reply. I heard she had a little drink at the dinner table, so I got some sobering tea prepared in case she couldn't handle it."

Noting the bottle in his hand, Eunice softened, "She did have a little wine.

Come on in."

It warmed her heart to see someone so genuinely concerned for Serena.

"Thanks, Mrs. Griffith."

Martin hurried in, worried about Serena, but remained courteous.

"Romeo, come on in,' Eunice said, her authoritative tone mixed with an elder's warmth and gentleness.

"Mrs. Griffith," Romeo greeted her, his arms laden with various gift bags.

Martin glanced at the bags Romeo was carrying and felt a pang of neglect; he'd been so focused on Serena that he'd forgotten to bring presents to the elders.

"From now on, no gifts when you come here,' Eunice said.

Martin looked at her gratefully, his eyes conveying his thanks. Next time, he had to prepare more gifts to show his respect.

"Just wait here for a moment. Darren wants to have a tea party in the garden.

I'll wheel him over and call Bella and Serena too"

"Thanks, Mrs. Griffith," Romeo and Martin said in unison.

Eunice hadn't been gone long when a servant chased after Serena, calling out, "Serena, Serena."

"Romeo, you came for me." Serena, completely out of her senses, lunged forward, wrapping her arms around a large tree, "I knew you liked me.

Romeo, I like you too, so much."

Romeo, sitting beside her, was speechless.

So was Martin.

"Serena, you're hugging a tree, not Mr. McMillian" the servant pleaded, "Please let go, you're barely dressed. Let me take you

back to your room before you catch a cold"

"Get off me, you tramp! Romeo is mine, don't even think about seducing him."

Serena slapped the servant hard, leaving her on the brink of tears.

"Romeo, I knew it, you do like me. I always thought, what's so special about my sister? She's so boring, so dull, so cold, she never cares about you, but I do.

Serena nestled into the tree's embrace. "I knew you'd choose me in the end.

What's that? You like me too? You can't stand my sister's dullness?"

Martin couldn't sit still any longer. He strode over, grabbed Serena's hand, and said, "You're drunk. I've brought you some sobering tea."

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