

THE PRINCESS AND THE PAUPER (ARABELLA)

Chapter 2071

Chapter 2071

Martin's ears were ringing, and a trickle of blood trickled from the corner of his mouth.

"You're dead to me—you hear that? From now on, you're no longer our son. Get out—just get out!"

Ansel was livid, his voice reaching a fever pitch, "Get out!"

Florence closed her eyes, her heart breaking, tears streaming down her face.

Diana watched the scene unfold in disbelief. Had her brother lost his mind? Was he really cutting ties

with his family for Serena?

What was he thinking?

Martin bowed deeply toward Ansel, his forehead touching the ground three times in a traditional sign of

respect, but Ansel wasn't having it. He lashed out, kicking Martin's shoulder and bellowed, "I said get

out!"

"Dad, don't get yourself worked up," Diana, noticing her father's rage seemed like a towering mountain

about to crumble, quickly stepped forward to support him and glanced at her brother. "Martin, are you

really willing to cut off Mom and Dad for Serena? Did they mean nothing raising you all these years?"

Martin slowly got to his feet, bowed to the three of them, and turned to leave the hospital room.

"Martin?"

Diana hadn't expected him to be so resolute. Ansel collapsed, and Diana, panic-stricken, called out,

"Dad, Dad? What are you two standing there for? Come over and help, quickly!"

Two bodyguards rushed forward to assist Ansel.

Diana hit the call button for the nurse and then dashed out after Martin.

At that moment, Martin was standing in front of the elevator. The doors dinged open, and he was about

to step in when...

"Martin."

Diana caught up with him, her fury unchecked, and she slapped him hard across the face.

"Are you even human?" She pummeled his chest with her fists, "Mom's in the ICU fighting for her life,

and Dad's been struck down by your selfishness! Even if you want to marry Serena, even if you want to

cut ties with the family, did it have to be now? Are you trying to kill them?"

Martin let her vent her rage until she was too exhausted to continue. Only then did he gently wipe the

tears from his sister's face with his sleeve.

"Don't pretend to care!" Diana pushed his hand away, tears flowing freely, "If you have any conscience

left, cancel the engagement party on Friday. Out of respect for the years mom and dad raised you, I'm

not asking for a lifetime of gratitude, just don't be the last blow that kills them!"

With that, Diana turned and walked away, her heart shattered.

Martin watched his sister's retreating figure, realizing he was in too deep to turn back now.

This process could take a month at least, or years at its worst.

During this time, he would have to bear the burden in silence. Read at Dramanovels.com

For now, he could only apologize to his family.

The next day in the afternoon, Arabella received a call from Jack.

Chapter 2072

Jack had been piecing together the puzzle of Arabella's aunt and uncle's business troubles. It seemed

their subsidiary companies had run into a mysterious sabotage, likely the work of an enigmatic figure

known as Stinger. The only details Jack had unearthed about Stinger were frustratingly vague: a man

with a youthful voice, on the lean side, and taller than average. His facial features remained a complete

mystery.

"The auctioneer mentioned that Stinger has shown up a few times, bidding on some jewelry. I'll send

you photos of the pieces," Jack said without ending the call, swiftly sharing a dozen images with

Arabella via WhatsApp.

As Arabella flicked through the photos, a knot formed in her stomach. Each piece was unmistakably

linked to the Collins family, exuding opulence and history.

If her eyes weren't deceiving her, these were the very jewels that Serena, when she was still the golden

girl of the Collins family, had received as gifts from her family.

Arabella spoke in a measured tone, "Back when Erik and Martha were still with us, they had a side

business selling off Serena's jewelry, designer clothes, and luxury bags in exchange for cash. Looking

at this, it's almost certain that Stinger is one of Erik's guys."

Jack continued, "The auction house doesn't have any surveillance since the clientele prefer their

privacy, and auctioneer didn't want to risk scaring them off with cameras.

There's no footage of Stinger.

But the owner did say that he always shows up wearing a black balaclava and a black baseball cap,

with just his eyes showing – sharp and full of malice, almost devoid of human emotion, cold. The night

he came to the auction, he didn't bid on anything. He just showed up for a bit and left."

"That means he wasn't there for the auction items," Arabella deduced. "He was probably meeting

someone, using the crowd and the lack of surveillance to his advantage. Now we can be sure that

Stinger is connected to Erik, and he might know who's pulling the strings behind the scenes."

Since Erik had been coerced into taking his own life with poison on the orders of this shadowy

puppeteer, capturing Stinger became crucial. He might be willing to avenge Erik by spilling what he

knew about the mastermind.

Yet there was also the chance that Stinger was now answering to Serena, viewing the Collins family as a thorn.

"Keep tracking Stinger's whereabouts," Arabella instructed. "See if there's any trail leading to or from the auction that could be linked to him."

"Will do."

No sooner had Arabella hung up than another call came through.

"Ms. Bella, it's me," the voice on the other end belonged to the precinct, "Protocol dictates we inform

the next of kin when we take someone into custody, but... you better come down here."

It was at the precinct that Arabella learned Yolanda's foster mother, Yvonne, had been dead for several

days. She examined the body, shared her findings with the officer in charge, and then accompanied

another officer to see Yolanda.

"The girl's tight-lipped, won't say a word, just keeps cursing you out, making a fuss about wanting to

see you."

"I'll go in," Arabella said, pushing open the door to the interrogation room. Upon seeing Arabella,

Yolanda lunged forward, nearly breaking free from the officer's grasp in her frenzy to reach Arabella.

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"Yolanda, this isn't the place to throw a tantrum!" the officer barked.

Chapter 2073

"Go on. I've got this," Arabella said, her voice steady as a rock and her expression unflappable.

The lead investigator and the stenographer exchanged worried glances. "Ms. Bella, just be careful,

okay? We're right outside if you need us," they cautioned.

Arabella nodded in affirmation.

Once the two had left the room, Yolanda glared at Arabella with eyes blazing with hatred, as if she

wished she could strike her dead right there and then.

"Don't say I never gave you a chance," Arabella suddenly declared, producing a small folding knife

from her jacket and tossing it before Yolanda. "I won't fight back. You've got three minutes."

Yolanda eyed the knife on the ground, her mind racing with doubts about whether this was some sort of

trap Arabella had set.

"You wanna kill me, right?" Arabella taunted with a disinterested tone. "Here's your shot."

Yolanda wasn't about to let an opportunity slip by. She was already locked up, and her charges were

heavy enough to put her on death row.

So, trap or not, she lunged for the knife, flipped it open, and thrust it at Arabella.

Arabella coolly started the stopwatch app on her phone.

Blinded by rage, Yolanda attacked with all her might, but Arabella effortlessly dodged every attempt.

Not once in those three minutes did Yolanda manage to so much as nick Arabella's clothing, let alone

harm a single hair on her head.

On the contrary, Arabella watched Yolanda's self-doubt grow, her breath coming in ragged gasps, and

said calmly, "Do you know why I gave you this chance? To show you that even though I was unarmed

and standing still, you can't hurt me. You're not, nor will you ever be, in my league."

Enraged, Yolanda felt the previous wound on her leg, inflicted by Arabella, reopening due to her

frenetic movements. The bandage was soaked with fresh blood, and the pain made her forehead sweat

profusely.

"If you hadn't slashed my hand and wounded my leg, it might have been a different story!" Yolanda spat

back defiantly. "Stand still if you dare!"

Arabella asked indifferently, "Do you know where I've just come from? Your foster mother, Yvonne, died

five days ago. I've just seen her body."

Yolanda's expression flickered with panic before she quickly composed herself.

Yolanda's eyes, red with fury, bore into Arabella.

"My guess is, on that day, you decided to kill me, but your foster mother found out. She tried to stop

you, and in the heat of the argument, you killed her." Content of

Her discomfort only solidified Arabella's suspicions.

Chapter 2074

"Do you know what I found on her clothes? In her dying moments, when she feared you'd take the

blame, she scrawled 'suicide' with her own blood. She didn't finish the last stroke of 'suicide' before she

passed."

Yolanda's eyes snapped open in disbelief, unable to fathom that her adoptive mother, Yvonne, had left

behind such a message.

"No, you're lying, you're making this up!" Yolanda's emotions surged.

Arabella pulled out her phone and showed Yolanda the message written on Yvonne's clothes, saying

indifferently, "You recognize her handwriting, don't you?"

That hit Yolanda like a ton of bricks, sending her collapsing to the floor.

"You stabbed her with a knife, and the murder weapon was found near the river by your house,

matching the wound on her body. It was your family's kitchen knife."

Yolanda looked at Arabella, stunned that she could find and infer all this.

"When you stabbed her, it wasn't fatal. She died from suffocation. I'm guessing when you saw her

bleeding, you didn't dare take her to the hospital, afraid they'd ask too many questions. And maybe you

were scared she'd wake up, stop your revenge, or even call the cops. So, you dug a hole in your

backyard and buried her."

Yolanda couldn't believe Arabella had figured it out, shaking her head frantically, "No, it wasn't like

that."

Arabella already knew from her expression that she was right, "Before you buried her alive, she must

have begged you not to do something stupid, but rage and fear blinded you. In the end, when she knew

there was no escape, she wrote 'suicide' on her clothes, trying to protect you with her last breath."

Even facing death, Yvonne didn't spend her precious moments calling for help, possibly because she

was in too much pain, without her phone, or maybe because she wanted to protect Yolanda, to awaken

the last bit of conscience in her.

Whatever her reason, she still had her daughter in her heart.

"No, no." Yolanda began to cry, and after a while, she collapsed, sobbing, "She overheard me talking

about revenge, always telling me to stop being foolish. I didn't listen, and then she threatened to call

the police. She never truly put herself in my shoes!"

Tears streamed down Yolanda's face as she spoke of her grief, "My real parents died, and I went from heiress of Tranquil City to nothing, my life plummeting from heaven to hell. But she never really understood! Instead, she wanted me to forget my past as if it never happened!"

Yolanda felt a mix of hatred, anger, and injustice, "Her false compassion killed her! She was timid and afraid – why did she expect me to be the same?"

Arabella watched her tear herself apart with grief, and asked calmly, "So you killed her?"

"If she hadn't wanted to call the cops, to get them to talk me out of it, I never would have picked up that

knife! I just wanted to scare her. But then she said if I was set on revenge, I might as well kill her first.

She thought I wouldn't do it." Yolanda's voice broke into sobs.

"So you hardened your heart?" Arabella felt she understood what happened.

Seeing Yolanda's emotional collapse, Arabella didn't press further, knowing she wouldn't get more

answers now. Content of DramaNovels.com

She pushed open the interrogation room door and walked away, leaving the crying woman alone.

Chapter 2075

Arabella wasn't one to seek immediate revenge. She knew all too well that once she stepped away

from this hellhole, there would be a line of others eager to settle scores with Yolanda.

Sure enough, before long, Yolanda was hauled into a dimly lit back room.

Romeo had arrived with his crew in tow.

There, Yolanda sat like a forsaken pup, lifting her tear-streaked eyes to face the man she once

dreamed of marrying. A wave of bitter regret and tumultuous emotions washed over her.

Two of Romeo's goons held her arms firmly, while a third force-fed her a bottle of some vile concoction.

Despite Yolanda's frantic struggles, the liquid poured down her throat.

"You had Bella drink this, and as her fiancé, I'll let you get a taste of your own medicine," Romeo's thin

lips parted, his voice cold and merciless. "Yours comes with a double dose."

Blood spilled from Yolanda's lips.

It felt as though invisible fists were tearing her insides apart. She hadn't expected the poison to act so

fast; in moments, her entire body was wracked with unbearable pain.

Romeo watched her transition from struggling in agony to desperately begging for mercy. His

handsome face remained impassive throughout.

Before Yolanda could even crawl to his feet, one of his men kicked her aside. No matter how many

times she tried, she was relentlessly shoved away.

"Please, give me the antidote." Yolanda knew there had to be one. How else could Arabella have

survived?

With a slight nod from Romeo, a henchman produced a small clear vial.

Romeo glanced down with detached eyes and spoke without a hint of sympathy, "If you want it, kneel

and bow your head fifty times."

Yolanda knew Romeo's demand was a way to avenge Arabella.

This act of submission was for Arabella.

Her forehead bled from the effort, and the torment of the poison made her appear less than human,

disheveled and wild.

In agony, she crawled after it, finally managing to pry the cap off. She gulped down the medicine and,

after an agonizing wait, felt the sweet relief of life returning to her veins. New chapter available on

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"This is just the beginning," Romeo said, signaling his men. They poured another dose of poison into

Yolanda's mouth.

Chapter 2076

Romeo stood up and left, and Yolanda wanted to plead for mercy, but before she could utter a sound,

the effects of the drug once again tormented her to the brink of death.

For the next twenty-four hours, Romeo's goons put her through hell.

The following day, she was jolted awake by a splash of saltwater, the sting of it searing through the

wounds Arabella had inflicted, almost causing her to pass out from the pain.

"You assault my servant, kidnap my daughter's friend, and attempt to poison my little girl. Today, I'm

going to get even for them," Louisa snarled, dragging Yolanda before her and slapping her across the

face repeatedly.

Yolanda's ears rang from the blows, blood trickled from the corner of her mouth, and she felt like a fish

on a chopping block, helplessly awaiting her fate. Now, she didn't dare hope for Louisa's mercy—she

just wanted this torture to end.

When Louisa grew tired, someone brought over a chair for her to rest.

Kenneth massaged her hands

and instructed his men to "get creative."

The henchmen took out all the needles Louisa had asked them to bring and started jabbing them into

Yolanda's hands and feet.

Some aimed for her wounds, making Yolanda scream in agony, fainting multiple times only to be

revived by saltwater, enduring a vicious cycle of torment.

"A vile creature like you doesn't deserve to live in this world." Just thinking about her precious daughter

coming home covered in blood in Romeo's arms, Louisa felt Yolanda's suffering was far too light.

It wasn't until Yolanda was hanging by a thread that Louisa stood up, her high heels crushing down on

Yolanda's hand.

"Ah." Yolanda's whole body trembled with pain, her vision darkening as she nearly lost consciousness.

"Don't worry, I won't let you die easily!" Louisa hissed the words and left with her entourage.

Time lost meaning as Arabella's brothers arrived and Yolanda lingered in agony, while from the small,

dark room, cries of sheer horror periodically escaped.

Elsewhere.

Arabella received a call from Grandpa Beck.

"Darling, I've come across some leads recently." The voice of Beck resonated on the other end.

This 'Seven Orifices Hemorrhage' would, after excruciating pain, cause one to bleed from all orifices

and die.

Grandpa Beck continued, "A necessary herb for concocting the 'Seven Orifices Hemorrhage' is called

Gutripper Grass. I tracked down the buyers of this herb and ended up with a lead on a guy nicknamed

'Stone.' He was in his twenties, without much ambition in life, just a desire to make quick, big money.

Turns out, he was killed by his own creation."

"Exactly," Grandpa Beck affirmed.

Chapter 2077

Yolanda clearly didn't have the clout or the resources, but who could it be? Arabella pondered deeply.

"I checked the local surveillance and spoke to some of the townsfolk. A witness claimed to have seen

someone heading towards Stone's residence. I went to Nelson and we sketched out a portrait based

on the witness's description of the guy's features. Take a look; do you recognize him?" Grandpa Beck

sent her the hand-drawn image as he spoke.

Arabella opened the image and saw a drawing of a man wearing a black ski mask and a black baseball

cap, tall and skinny in build.

"Stinger?" Arabella was surprised.

Grandpa Beck was even more taken aback, "You know him? Who's Stinger?"

Arabella recounted the incident where Jack had held the auction house owner at gunpoint, and the

man in the sketch closely resembled the description of Stinger, especially the sharp, piercing eyes that

seemed devoid of any human emotion, cold as a hitman's.

"If I'm not mistaken, he's Erik's right-hand man. Before Erik died, he left a phone with Serena, which

probably has Stinger's contact details. So, Stinger must be secretly working for Serena," Arabella

speculated.

Upon hearing her analysis, Grandpa Beck was even more surprised. "So, you're saying that Serena

saw the news, knew that Attlee and Olga were executed, guessed that Yolanda harbored hatred, and

wanted to use Yolanda to get rid of you?"

"It's very likely. Now we just need to catch the Stinger to unveil the truth," Arabella said, then thanked

Grandpa Beck for helping her investigate despite his age, urging him to rest more and not risk probing into these dangerous matters.

But Grandpa Beck couldn't help asking, "If we catch Stinger and he admits that Serena wanted you

gone, what do you plan to do with Serena?"

Without a second thought, Arabella blurted out, "She wanted to kill me; why would I go easy on her?"

Grandpa Beck was relieved to hear her say this. He was worried Arabella might feel too compassionate

because of family ties.

But now, this answer put his mind at ease.

If it was indeed Serena's doing, like Arabella, he wouldn't let Serena get away with it.

A while later.

Another call came for Arabella.

"Ms. Bella, Yolanda couldn't take the pressure anymore and finally spilled the beans. Someone gave

her a sum of money, to hire a hitman to kill you. But she wasn't connected to that underworld, so she

didn't immediately act against you after taking the money."

Arabella calmly asked, "Did Yolanda say who this person was? Why would they help her?"

"She said that he just told her he was an enemy of yours too, wanting you dead even more than she

did, but he couldn't act openly. Yolanda also mentioned that every time they met, he wore a black ski

mask and a black baseball cap, only revealing that he was a man, slim and about two heads taller than

her, with a young-sounding voice. Most importantly, he had a scar about two inches long on the back of

his left hand." Content of DramaNovels.com

"Alright, got it," Arabella hung up the phone.

Chapter 2078

In the blink of an eye, it was Friday.

Martin and Serena's engagement party was in full swing at the Century Grand Hotel.

The internet was abuzz with news of their wedding, with Martin having invited over a hundred

journalists to their engagement party, in addition to business partners and all his friends.

Except for Fitch, all his buddies showed up to support them.

He didn't invite family or personal connections. Just the people Martin had met were enough to throw a

lavish wedding.

When the auspicious moment arrived, Serena, dressed in a stunning wedding gown designed by a top

designer and wearing a priceless tiara and jewels, was elevated from beneath the stage into the view

of all the guests.

Today, she wasn't in a wheelchair but had a supporting chair hidden under the voluminous skirt of her

gown. Because her dress was so full, the guests couldn't tell there was an issue with her legs and,

seeing her posture, assumed she was standing on the stage.

Led by the master of ceremonies, Martin walked down the aisle, holding Serena's hand under the gaze

of all the guests, uttering his vows with deep affection and devotion.

As petals rained down, Martin slipped a diamond ring worth a fortune onto Serena's finger.

Amidst thunderous applause, they kissed. To avoid any slip-ups, Martin spoke only a few words of

thanks to the guests before leading Serena off the stage, out of sight.

A celebrity took the stage to sing a fitting song titled "I Do," captivating the guests below.

Backstage, Martin asked Serena if she was tired, if it was hard to rely on the supporting chair. Serena

shook her head gently; she wasn't done making her mark yet.

Suddenly, Martin received a phone call that changed his expression. "What? Okay, I'll be right there."

Serena, seeing him hang up, asked anxiously, "What happened?"

"My mom tried to jump from a building, she's been taken to the hospital. I need to go."

Martin moved to leave, but Serena grabbed his hand, "I'm coming with you. I'm your wife now!"

After all, she was part of the Cooper family now!

Martin glanced at her flouncy wedding gown, knowing she was not easily mobile, "The engagement

party can't go on without you. I'll check out the situation and get back to you. Stay here for now."

Serena watched his hurried departure without further protest.

At the hospital.

"Where's my dad, my sister?" Martin asked. Read at Dramanovels.com

Lana replied, "About an hour ago."

Chapter 2079

An hour ago?

Martin froze in his tracks.

It didn't take more than half an hour to get from his house to the Century Grand Hotel. If his sister

Diana had really gone to the hotel to confront him after learning of their mother's accident, they would

have bumped into each other before he left the hotel. But when he had left just moments ago, there had been no sign of Diana.

Just then, his phone rang again. It was Diana calling.

"Diana," Martin answered immediately, anxiety edging his voice. "Where are you?"

"Hello, is this the brother of the phone's owner? You were listed as a recent contact. I'm a nurse at

Hope Hospital. The phone's owner was in a car accident and was brought here by a Good Samaritan.

She's in critical condition and needs surgery urgently. Could you please come and handle the payment?"

"What are you talking about?" Martin's world rocked on its axis. "Which floor are you on? I'm on my way."

"Emergency, twelfth floor."

"Got it."

Without a second thought, Martin dashed to the elevator and shot up to the twelfth floor. He paid the

fee and sought out the attending physician to inquire about Diana's condition.

"The patient has multiple bilateral rib fractures, a sternal fracture, lung contusion, and a traumatic

splenic rupture, among several other injuries. She was in severe shock upon arrival and is in critical

condition."

Martin's heart clenched with worry, and he asked urgently, "When will she be out of the woods?"

"It's hard to say. Even if she pulls through this, there are more hurdles ahead. Rest assured, our

surgical team is doing everything possible to save her."

As Martin stared toward the operating room, lost in concern, his phone rang with a call from the family's bodyguard.

"Mr. Martin, your mother's attending physician would like to speak with you."

"Alright, I'm on my way." The thought of all three family members hospitalized in one night left Martin utterly drained.

"Mr. Martin," the doctor began upon seeing him, briefing him on Florence's condition. "Your mother was

in critical condition when she arrived. We performed a series of preliminary exams and symptomatic

treatments. She was vomiting continuously, and before we had the test results, we were worried about

increased intracranial bleeding and hematoma causing high intracranial pressure, so we had to

intubate her and put her on a ventilator."

The doctor continued, "Her blood pressure kept dropping, and the internal bleeding wouldn't stop. Her

heart rate on the monitor was climbing, so we injected red blood cells and plasma and administered

norepinephrine to maintain her blood pressure. We also noted her potassium levels were below

normal, so to prevent electrolyte imbalance, we administered potassium."

Martin didn't fully grasp the medical jargon, but he understood his mother's condition was grave.

"Is she in danger? When can she be cured?" Martin's worry was palpable.

"It's hard to predict. Even if this surgery is successful, there's a high risk of complications afterward. It

will be difficult for her to overcome each one." Updated at

Heartbroken, Martin felt as if his world was collapsing. Grasping the doctor's shoulders, he pleaded,

"Doctor, please, you must save her."

Chapter 2080

The maid, Lana, was scared witless, fearing the blame would fall on her. She rushed to explain, "I didn't see anything."

Ever since Martin cut ties with his family, Florence was inconsolable and had gone home to recuperate.

"Mrs. Florence has been like a walking dead, numb and indifferent, sometimes even crying silently."

"Today is your engagement party, and Mrs. Florence hasn't slept since last night. She hasn't had a bite

to eat or a drop to drink all day, and at 7 p.m., she silently went back to her room."

"We thought she was just tired and wanted to rest, but then there was this huge crash, and when we

ran out, we realized that Mrs. Florence had jumped."

Lana, bowing deeply, quickly added, "Mr. Martin, I truly had no idea Mrs. Florence would take her own

life. If I had known, I would have stopped her by any means necessary, staying right by her side."

She never imagined that when Florence argued with Martin and spoke in anger, she meant every word!

Florence had said that if Martin insisted on marrying Serena, she would jump into a river, off a building.

In short, she wanted to turn his joyful occasion into one of mourning.

She wanted to make him feel guilty for the rest of his life!

"When we found Mrs. Florence after she jumped, we immediately had the driver prepare the car and

called for the master and Miss Diana. Mr. Ansel fainted on the spot when he saw Mrs. Florence's

condition, and Miss Diana ordered us to take Mrs. Florence and Mr. Ansel to the hospital, while she

went to confront you on her own."

It was only moments ago, when Lana overheard Martin on the phone, that she learned Miss Diana had

also been in an accident and was rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery.

"She's on the twelfth floor in surgery. Wait there for her, and let me know the moment the surgery is

over," Martin instructed with exhaustion.

"Yes, sir," Lana said quickly, bowing and retreating.

After a while, Martin received a video from one of his men.

"Mr. Martin, this is the road surveillance footage of Miss Diana's car accident."

Upon viewing the footage, Martin saw that on a mountain road, a truck driver seemingly fell asleep at

the wheel, his vehicle swaying dangerously. Diana's car was also speeding, and they were about to

collide head-on.

Diana's frantic honking woke the truck driver, who swerved sharply, slamming into the mountainside.

Diana, in an attempt to avoid him, crashed into the guardrail, and her car tumbled down.

"This is a photo from the scene of the accident."

From the photo, Martin could see that Diana's car was completely mangled.

His heart ached; if the car was in such a state, what were the chances she was unharmed?

Martin watched the surveillance video and the scene photos over and over, his heart heavy with grief.

The despair and fear his sister must have felt as she fell.

Just then, his phone rang. It was Serena.

"Martin, how's Mom?" Serena's concerned voice came through the line.

Updated at

Serena, without a hint of blame, spoke with understanding, "I'll come be with you after I've seen the

guests off."

