

The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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Why hadn't she realized the family's bias before? At this moment, Martha knocked on her door, not waiting for her consent, she pushed the door open impatiently.

"Serena, I'm sorry I'm late."

Martha saw the girl sitting on the bed, her eyes red and swollen from crying, and her heart ached. "I had the day off today.

Remember, you said the bakery items at Tranquil Haven Cafe were delicious, so I queued up for three hours just to buy some for you. But when I got home, that wicked witch wouldn't let me bring them in. She said Hans had punished you by making you reflect on your actions in your room."

This wicked witch was none other than Edith.

Seeing the panting Martha who had rushed over, caring about her, the last defense in Serena's heart broke, and she cried even harder.

"Serena, don't cry." Martha was at a loss for words to comfort her.

Serena had never cried out loud like this before, even the vigilant Edith standing outside the door could hear her clearly.

Seeing her crying her heart out, all Martha could do was to hand her some tissues and wait for her to stop crying before wiping her tears.

"Martha" Serena lifted her swollen eyes and asked in a hoarse voice, "Do you still remember, long time ago, when Hans invited me to the observation deck to chat?"

"Of course, I remember." Martha said while bending down to help her wipe her tears, "Hans said, it was normal for everyone to be concerned about Arabella's feelings as she had just returned home. You might have misunderstood that everyone was treating you differently than before. But in everyone's eyes, you were still a part of this home, nothing had changed"

Serena didn't expect Martha to remember so clearly. Tears fell again. At that time, Hans spoke so sincerely, she believed him.

Looking back now, she was really naive, too naive!

“Hans also asked you then, how your parents and brothers have been treating you over the years. He said that what they gave

to Arabella was what you had for the past eighteen years! This was originally Arabella's home.

Arabella was supposed to come back and enjoy the life that should have belonged to her.”

When Serena heard this, her tears fell, and she gave a tragic smile.

“He also said that Arabella was the real daughter of the Collins family, they should be kind to her. As her brother, he should

pamper and cherish her, especially after she had suffered outside for eighteen years. Her future life should be doubly

compensated. You even explained that you had no animosity towards Arabella, but Hans cut you off, saying that he could tell

how much animosity you had”

Serena's smile became even more bitter and sorrowful.

Yeah, since then, Hans had stopped trusting her, stopped listening to her explanations, only believing what he saw.

“Hans said that even if Arabella returned home, the affection they have shown you over these eighteen years was not fake. You could still stay, like before, buy whatever you wanted, do whatever you wanted, no one would restrict you, or treat you differently.”

Serena's laughter was filled with tears.

“Hans also said that Arabella held no animosity towards you. Sometimes it was you who were unreasonable first, but Arabella was always tolerant, happy to have such a sister. He also said something like, Arabella accepted you for the sake of the parents and brothers, and it gave you an opportunity to be envious of her, to hurt her. If she had firmly refused to let you stay in this home from the beginning, have you ever thought about what your fate would be?”

Serena laughed heartbreakingly for a while before saying, “Martha, you told me then that Hans was indirectly warning me that if I didn't get along well with Arabella, I would have to leave home. At that time, I didn't believe your words, I thought Hans was right. I must have been hit on the head!”

At that time, she doubted herself, feeling that this home indeed didn't belong to her. The love of her parents and brothers, the luxurious lifestyle, the servants' attention, all didn't belong to her. She had enjoyed Arabella's life for eighteen years.

But now she realized that Martha was right. It was the fault of her parents for confusing the children. How could she be blamed?

She also lost eighteen years of life being loved by her biological parents, she also suffered losses!

"It's all my fault. I didn't listen to you. I thought if I treated Arabella as my real sister, they would treat me as before."

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"Absolutely not!" Martha sympathized, "Have you forgotten? Last time, you were fooled by just a few words from Hans. You naively thought they would treat everyone equally. If Hans really saw you as his sister, he wouldn't have warned you like that, let alone lock you up like he did today."

Serena let out a sorrowful laugh. If anyone knew that she had been locked in her room by Hans for self-reflection.

The word would spread, and it would be so humiliating.

"Last time, I told you to take advantage of their affection for you. Either kick Arabella out of the Collins family, or strive for the maximum benefits within the family, or marry Mr. McMillian and become the most glamorous woman in the world. But you chose none of these paths. Instead, you came up with the most useless one - to build a good relationship with Arabella and please everyone in the Collins family."

Only now did Serena realize how foolish she had been, thinking she could be real sisters with Arabella.

"If I had listened to you earlier, things wouldn't have escalated to this point. I was the one who couldn't let go, always holding onto a shred of illusion, always feeling that Hans and the others could really be impartial."

"Ah, if they were truly fair, before Hans asked you to talk on the terrace, they wouldn't have planted her favorite flowers on Bella's balcony"

That was not something Hans would do!

If he was really fair, why did Arabella have flowers, and Serena didn't?

Everything that he had given Arabella, like planting flowers, gifting a four-leaf clover necklace, were things that Serena had never owned.

Serena didn't know how long she had been crying. For the first time, she realized that her tears seemed endless.

Her heart was truly broken, and she was in despair.

"You can tell she was raised in a small family, inexperienced in the world. Even after returning to the richest family, her poor taste

has not changed! Every time I see the marigold flowers swaying in the wind on her balcony, I feel that she lacks refinement, is superficial, and cannot hold her own in society! Her taste has brought down the standard of the Collins family's prestigious garden!"

Serena thought the same. Out of all the flowers, why did she have to like marigold, such a common plant. After Serena calmed down a bit, Martha gave her some advice.

"Serena, there are many online platforms that buy luxury goods at high prices. You have a whole closet full of clothes, shoes, and bags, many of them still with tags. I calculated it, and you could sell them for at least a million dollars." Some of the dresses worth tens of thousands of dollars, Serena wore only once.

Some of the limited edition handbags, worth eighty or so thousand dollars, Serena carried once and then let them gather dust in her closet.

"If you really marry Mr. Cooper in the future, and have a chauffeur to drive you around, there's no point in keeping all those luxury cars. You might as well sell them all."

If she sold all of them, she could get one or two million dollars. And that was just from the cars!

“And all the jewelry you've received since you were young.”

That was worth a lot.

Just the pink sapphire necklace she received on her birth year was now worth over two hundred thousand dollars.

If she kept a few pieces of jewelry as her dowry and sold the rest, she could easily make a few million dollars.

“My initial estimate is that if you sell everything, you could make around six million dollars.”

Serena was surprised that Martha knew her assets better than she did. She had never paid attention to how much these things were worth.

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“Serena, not to rain on your parade, but if Hans is capable of doing this, who knows if he might kick you out someday? Instead of leaving penniless, it might be better to start selling some stuff now.

She had at least sixty million dollars in the bank, plus her real estate like houses and stores. Her personal assets could easily surpass a hundred million dollars.

“Of course, this is the worst-case scenario. If Hans forgives you and you stay in this family, until the day you marry Mr. Cooper, you can earn more. Your parents once mentioned that your wedding gift would be more than Brooklyn's sister. If it reaches around a hundred million, your net worth would jump to two hundred million!”

How many heiresses could boast of such fortune?

“And if Mr. Cooper gives you more money and shares as a wedding gift, imagine the wealth you'd amass.”

It was unimaginable!

Hearing Martha's words, Serena's tears welled up in her eyes, forgotten to fall.

She had never realized her assets could amount to so much.

"So the goal now is to find a way to stay in the Collins family, keeping your parents happy and willing to spend money on you.

Later, we can sell these things, every penny counts."

Serena used to think Martha's idea was wrong, as these were heartfelt gifts from her family. But after Hans' coldness, she finally

nodded, "After this storm passes, you can help me handle this. But be cautious."

"Serena, don't worry! Leave it all to me, act as if you don't know anything. If we get caught, I'll take the fall,"

Martha spoke, looking at her with a hint of pity, "But for now, you'll have to swallow your pride. I know you've never had to do this."

Serena's eyes reddened, and her nose stung, "If they are heartless, they can't blame me for being ruthless!"

Swallowing her pride was only temporary.

Even if she had to leave, she would take all the benefits and ruin Arabella first!

Martha was overjoyed seeing Serena's change of heart, but she kept her excitement concealed.

"They treasure Arabella because she's talented and their own daughter. In the end, it's all Arabella's fault. If she had spoken up for you when Hans was blaming you, things could have been different."

Serena chuckled coldly. Arabella standing up for her? It would be a miracle if she didn't add insult to injury!

Martha was right. It was all Arabella's fault. If Arabella was more amicable, they could at least be sisters!

Even ordinary sisterhood would be better than being enemies!

"Hans will be traveling abroad soon. The Temple family lost a child, and your parents will be visiting there often.

The opportunity to deal with that brat is coming." Did the Collins family think Arabella was so great? If they could find out that Arabella also had flaws, or irreparable stains.

"But if something happens to Arabella, Hans will suspect us first"

If those luxury goods hadn't been sold yet, and Hans kicked her out.

“We're not trying to kill her, just teach her a lesson. I'll find someone to do it seamlessly. Without evidence, Hans can't blame us, can he?”

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“Listen, if Hans ever finds a way to pin this on us, I'll take the fall. I'll say it was all my idea, and that you had nothing to do with it”

Serena had never expected such loyalty from a servant. It was as if Martha was more of a family than her own kin, and the

realization moved her.

"With me by your side, Serena, I'll make sure Arabella understands the consequences of crossing you!" Martha's eyes flashed with a hard edge at the mention of Arabella.

"Oh, and another thing. If you ever run into Arabella when there aren't any others around, don't feel the need to be polite."

Martha advised.

Arabella had taken their kindness for granted in the past. Well, she wouldn't blame them if they showed no mercy from now on!

"Don't worry, Martha. I won't be polite to her anymore." Serena seemed to have made a decision, her eyes filled with a vengeful light.

Meanwhile, Louisa woke up with a start from a nightmare.

Sitting up in her bed, heart still pounding, she glanced at the clock to find it was already evening. She quickly changed and prepared to head out.

"Ma'am, where are you off to? Dinner's almost ready." a servant tried to persuade her in the living room.

"I'm not hungry. Louisa replied, wrapping a scarf around her neck. "By the way, did you invite Serena's friends to stay for dinner?"

"They've left."

"They left?" Louisa was surprised, wondering why they hadn't stayed for a meal.

The servant hesitated, wanting to mention the argument that seemed to have taken place between Serena's friends that afternoon.

Serena had returned to her room crying.

But before the servant could explain, Louisa's phone rang.

"Hello, honey? I'm about to head out. What? Celeste fainted? I'll be right there."

Seeing Louisa rush out the door, the servant said nothing more.

Elsewhere, Hans was driving back to the office, his mind wandering back to a memory of a little girl falling in the garden years

ago. She had scraped her knee badly and was clearly in pain, but she still managed to put on a brave face to keep everyone else from worrying.

Back then, Serena was so considerate and caring, like a warm little blanket that brought comfort and joy.

When did that change?

Was it when Arabella returned home?

Or was it when Arabella started to shine?

He remembered the first time he saw Arabella. She was assisting Molly at a design competition, her right wrist bruised and swollen, clearly injured, yet she had managed to embroider a beautiful rose onto a dress with that hand.

The head of the Fashion Designers Association of Solterra, Flora, was one of the judges. She accidentally let slip that Arabella was the founder of QY.

Despite her young age, Arabella had founded a company, managed family businesses, and despite her position, was willing to assist and nurture the next generation.

This kind of spirit and vision surpassed many. Through their interactions, he saw more of her brilliance.

Though he didn't want to compare Arabella with Serena, there was a clear difference in their attitudes and how they handled situations.

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On the other side of town.

When Arabella saw Romeo off at the gate of their villa, Romeo gave her a gentle pat on her head, "I'm sorry for the trouble."

"It's okay."

She wasn't going to be hurt by Serena's small schemes.

"There's something I haven't told you." Romeo started, his gaze locked with Arabella's, "Hans reached out to me on Christmas Eve"

This surprised Arabella, as Hans didn't seem like the type to take the initiative to communicate.

"The family has been discussing revealing your true identity to the world in less than a month. So Clark and I want to deal with

the external forces as soon as possible, so that everyone will know that you are the true Collins family heiress."

What he didn't expect was Serena's attempt to tarnish Arabella's reputation with outrageous lies. A smirk played on Arabella's lips, "So, they were planning to surprise me, but you spoiled the surprise?"

"Hans should tell you about this tonight." Romeo patted her head again, "Everyone wants to reveal your identity as soon as possible, but due to various reasons, we've let her have her way."

"It's okay. Whether it's revealed or not, it doesn't matter to me." Arabella smiled, "Don't worry about me. Go home and be careful on the road."

"If she tries any tricks, remember to tell me."

"Don't worry. Can't I handle her?" Arabella laughed, clearly not considering Serena a threat at all.

"Tomorrow the Temple family might hold a funeral. I'll pick you up then."

"Okay."

After Romeo left, Arabella returned to Reflections Villa.

She ate, drank, and returned to her room to work. She needed to make time to attend Crystal's funeral and check on her

grandfather's health.

On the other side.

Upon hearing the news, Martha rushed to Serena, "Serena, that damn girl ate two bowls of pasta tonight! Even a pig can't eat as much as she does! While you're here starving and suffering, she's eating and sleeping well!"

"I expected as much." Serena laid in bed weakly, "The more miserable I am, the happier she is."

Just because Arabella had Hans's support for now, what was there to be proud of?

"Serena, how are you feeling now?" Martha asked with concern.

Serena was as white as a sheet, her lips void of color. In hopes of gaining Hans's forgiveness, she had soaked in a cold bath for a full hour!

Upon hearing the beep of the thermometer, Martha quickly checked it, "Oh my god, Serena, you have a fever of 102 Fahrenheit!

I'll get you a cooling patch."

"Martha." Serena stopped her weakly, "If you use it now, it'll all be for nothing. Call Hans and ask when he's coming back."

"Right, right." Martha hadn't thought Serena would still be so calm even when she was sick. She had really changed!

As Martha reached for her phone, Serena's vision began to blur until she passed out.

"Hello Hans, when will you be home? It's already eight. It's Serena."

Before Martha could finish, Hans coldly interrupted her, "Let her wait."

"But Serena can't wait! She's sick, with a fever of 102 Fahrenheit! Her face is pale. She's been crying all afternoon. She might have gotten sick from crying so hard."

Hans's gaze flickered with complexity.

"Please, Hans, come home soon." Martha's voice was filled with tears, "Serena hasn't eaten anything till now and she's burning up with fever."

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"Alright." Hans hung up without saying whether he'd be coming home or not.

Martha was frantic, locking at Serena unconscious on the bed, her temperature already spiking at 102.6 Fahrenheit.

She opened the door and called out to Edith, who was standing by the entrance. "Serena's running a fever, go grab some fever patches. Also, get the kitchen to make something she likes."

"Are you ordering me around?"

"What do you mean?" Martha put on a haughty air.

"Serena's sick, isn't it your job as a servant to take care of her?"

"Why don't you?"

"I need to stay here and look after Serena!"

Edith stood in place, giving a cold laugh. "Serena hasn't apologized to Ms. Bella yet."

"What did you say?"

“Hans said not to feed her until she shows remorse. If you want a fever patch, you can go get it yourself. My job is to stand here

“Edith, are you taking me for a fool?” Martha bristled with rage. “Who do you think you are?”

“I'm just a humble servant.’ Edith met her gaze, unflinching. “Just like you.”

Martha was furious. “Just you wait!”

As Martha stormed out, she deliberately bumped into Edith. Unfazed, Edith stuck out a foot to trip her up.

“Once Serena wakes up, I'll tell her everything that happened today!”

“You talk as if you have a lady backing you!” Edith wasn't afraid of her, instead, she gave a snort and continued to stand guard at the door.

Martha's eyes flashed with a murderous intent, but she swallowed her anger for the moment.

After what felt like forever, Martha heard footsteps approaching and quickly stuck the fever patch onto Serena's forehead.

Upon hearing the knock, Martha ran to the door, tears streaming down her face. “Oh Hans, thank goodness you're back!”

Serena's fever won't break. I've been so worried! Before she passed out, she kept saying she was sorry, admitting she was

wrong."

Hans looked at the unconscious girl on the bed. Her cheeks were flushed like ripe apples, and it didn't seem like she was faking it.

"Did you call a doctor?" Hans asked.

Through her tears, Martha exclaimed, "Edith wouldn't even give us a fever patch, she made everything difficult! I had to go get it myself. Let alone calling a doctor, we're lucky to even have this fever patch!"

Edith, standing by the door, heard Martha twisting the facts and was about to retort.

Martha started to cry harder. "Serena's so sick and there's no doctor to see her. She hasn't had a bite to eat since noon. She's

never known such hardship! She kept saying she was wrong, that she wanted to apologize to you and Ms. Bella when you got back. But she couldn't hold on."

Before Hans could respond, Martha fell to her knees.

"Hans, I beg you, for the sake of your sibling bond, please allow a doctor to see Serena. I'm really afraid for her life. She's been

running a high fever for so long! Please let the kitchen prepare some hot porridge for her? I beg you."

Seeing this woman in her fifties kneeling on the floor, crying and pleading, Hans was moved. Looking at the girl on the bed, he was reminded of years ago when she was sick, how the whole family would gather around her, caring and fussing.

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“Go fetch the doctor.”

When Martha heard Hans's command, her bowing motion abruptly froze in surprise. Overjoyed, she exclaimed, “Thank you,

Hans, thank you! I'll call Dr. Lee right away."

When Dr. Lee arrived, Martha, with tears in her eyes, said excitedly, "Serena, Dr. Lee is here. You're going to be fine. Hans is here to see you too."

While Dr. Lee was examining the girl on the bed, Martha feared the doctor would discover Serena's fever was due to a common cold caught from getting chilled. So, she concocted a story.

"Serena got her heart broken. She cried from afternoon till night. Then she just developed a fever." Dr. Lee nodded, "Crying can raise the body temperature, making the body feel hot, but after a while, once the emotions stabilize, the body temperature will gradually return to normal."

"But Serena's been having a fever for a while now, and there's no sign of her temperature going down."

"She caught a cold."

Upon hearing this, Martha felt a sudden pang in her heart. She hadn't expected Dr. Lee to figure it out! Feigning ignorance, she asked, "Can crying for too long also cause a fever?"

"Well" Dr. Lee paused his examination and looked at her, "Crying for a long time can lead to a weakened immune system,

making one susceptible to catching a cold. If you're exposed to cold wind or rain during this time, you can easily get sick."

"She was fine in the afternoon,' Hans added.

Martha, worried that Serena's cold bath would be suspected, quickly interjected, "Oh, I remember now. Serena cried for a long time in the afternoon, and no amount of comforting helped. In the end, she went to the balcony to get some fresh air. Maybe she caught a chill then."

Dr. Lee nodded understandingly, "That's possible."

"Serena mentioned how last winter, the family gathered around the fireplace for hot chocolate, and the winter before that."

Martha intentionally stopped there, noticing Hans seemed to be reminiscing about old times. She felt a sense of relief, knowing that it would work.

"Take some medicine. If it's above 101.3 Fahrenheit, a fever patch won't work." Dr. Lee finished his diagnosis and prescribed some medication to Martha.

Martha thanked him repeatedly. After seeing Dr. Lee off, she fed Serena the medicine.

"Could you step outside for a moment?"

After she finished giving Serena her medicine, Hans suddenly spoke.

Martha felt a sense of dread but followed Hans onto the balcony.

Hans's gaze was intimidating no matter who he looked at. Now, he looked at Martha and asked, "You've been in this family for many years. There are some things I'm going to ask outright."

"Feel free to ask, Hans," Martha replied respectfully, "As long as I know, I'll tell you everything."

"Then tell me, what kind of person is Serena?"

"Serena's virtues are endless! She's kind-hearted, innocent, graceful, cheerful, beautiful, brave, considerate, talented in music, chess, poetry, painting"

"And how can such a person suddenly become narrow-minded, cunning, and scheming?"

Upon hearing this, Martha realized Hans's concerns and quickly explained, "Mr. Collins, I've never encouraged Serena to do anything wrong. Please understand!"

"Serena was raised by you. Today, she made a mistake, and you're responsible too." Hans looked at her emotionlessly, "You're not getting this month's salary, and the holiday bonus."

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"Yes, Mr. Collins."

Martha acknowledged, her heart filled with unwillingness. However, she dared not voice any opposition.

"Serena has always listened to you. It's up to you to guide her now"

"I'll do my best, Mr. Collins."

Hans was about to leave when a sudden thought stopped him in his tracks.

"Bella is my own sister."

Martha felt her heart lurch at his words.

"Don't give her any more trouble"

"Yes."

Martha was taken aback. She hadn't expected Hans to say such a thing. As she watched him walk away, her annoyance grew.

Who was really causing trouble for whom?

The thought of Serena having to apologize to that annoying girl the next day made her blood boil.

The following morning, Arabella discovered a message from the previous night. It was from Crystal's mother, Celeste.

[Bella, thank you for trying your best to save Crystal. Today is her funeral. You'll come, won't you?]

[Yes] Arabella replied swiftly.

[Crystal adored you. I believe she would be very happy to have you there to say goodbye.]

Arabella initially wanted to reply with two words: [My condolences.] But she knew that the pain of losing a daughter couldn't be soothed by mere words.

So, she replied instead: [I'll be there soon.]

Crystal's funeral was to be held at the Temple family cemetery. The local psychic said that the best time to bury the deceased

was at ten in the morning, as the geomantic layout of the Temple family's land, coupled with the deceased's birth details, would

ensure her wealth and happiness in her next life.

Hence, the funeral was hastily arranged.

Despite the short notice, the ceremony was grandly decorated, and many people attended.

When Arabella and Romeo arrived, they saw a sea of mourners dressed in black, a testament to the wide-ranging connections of the Temple family.

The cemetery was adorned with layers of wreaths and elegies, enveloping the graveyard like a flower bed.

Members of the Temple family, clad in mourning attire, wept in front of the altar, each immersed in their own sorrow.

After Romeo and Arabella had laid their wreath and paid their respects, they approached the open-air altar to offer incense to Crystal.

Their striking appearance drew many eyes.

After offering incense, Arabella looked at Crystal's black and white portrait and the coffin beneath it, recalling the girl's lively demeanor when they first met.

Her heart was filled with sorrow. The sound of the Temple family's crying brought back the pain of losing her beloved Grandma Grace.

The Temple family members bowed to every visitor who offered incense. Even though Alger and Celeste, leading the family,

were crying heavily, they still managed to bend over to thank Romeo and Arabella for their presence. "Romeo, thank you for coming" Alger, unable to hold back his tears, embraced Romeo. "My condolences,' Romeo comforted, patting his back.

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Alger's sobbing grew even more heart-wrenching, this feeling of losing a daughter, as if the sky was falling, was too painful, too lethal.

"Y'all need to hold it together. Crystal would be worried." Arabella hugged Celeste, "Before Crystal left, what she was most worried about, what she couldn't let go of, was definitely you guys."

Celeste cried with immense sorrow, "I know, I know. but I just can't calm down. Bella, I only have one daughter.

How could God be so cruel to take her away? What am I supposed to do for the rest of my life?"

Her sobbing only caused the other members of the Temple family to fall deeper into sorrow.

"I know, I understand." Arabella patted Celeste's back. She had been through all of this and she knew exactly how it felt, like falling into the deep sea, unable to save herself, even wanting to close her eyes and sink to the bottom.

"I miss her so much, I wish she could sit up and talk to me. I only have one daughter, from an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, she grew into a graceful girl. I had imagined countless possibilities for her future, but I never thought she would die like this."

Celeste's heartbreaking sobs caused the surrounding relatives and mourners to shed tears.

They also never imagined that such a promising girl would meet with such a tragic fate.

At this moment, a disturbance arose from the crowd, Celeste lifted her tear-filled eyes to see the crowd making way for Clark, wearing a black suit, his eyes red as he entered the chapel.

Celeste was suddenly filled with rage, "What are you doing here? The Temple family didn't invite you, get out of here."

Arabella wanted to say something for Clark.

But Celeste told her, "You saved Crystal, and Crystal liked you very much when she was alive.

You represent the Collins family, I

have no objection, but he is not allowed to step in here!"

"I want to pay my respects to Crystal."

Clark knew that they hated him to the core, but for Crystal's last journey, he had to be there.

Crystal died attempting to save Carol's foster parents, if he didn't come, how could he face his own conscience!

"Get out, get out of here!" Alger, with red eyes, shoved Clark away, "You're not welcome here, you know better than anyone why Crystal is lying here! Get out!"

Why did he have to come and make things worse?

They had lost their only daughter, their lives were destined to be lonely.

Why did he have to appear and add insult to injury?

"Take your things and leave." Alger violently threw the wreath Clark brought for Crystal at him.

At this moment, a bone-chilling wind whistled by, and the sky began to scatter delicate snowflakes. Celeste looked up at the sight of the snowflakes, her eyes reddening even more, was Crystal showing a sign.

She loved snow in her lifetime.

Did they treat Clark like this, so she showed a sign, wanting them to show mercy?

"Crystal probably wanted my brother to be here for her last journey." Arabella spoke, "Please, let my brother offer incense for Crystal, okay?"

Alger and Celeste broke down in tears.

Clark bowed to them and steadily walked towards the portrait.

The girl's radiant smile, her bright eyes were still so vivid, yet during her lifetime, she had undergone inhumane torment.

Tears welled up in Clark's eyes. He lit the incense, and deeply bowed to the portrait.

Another gust of wind blew, the snowflakes landed on Clark's shoulder, like an invisible hand, gently comforting him.

Alger and Celeste cried even harder, surely their daughter was showing a sign, she saw this man come to bid her farewell, so a gust of wind came, as a response. When Clark bowed to the Temple family, Alger and Celeste finally bowed back to him. Arabella's eyes were somewhat moist.

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“The time has come; the funeral director checked the time and drew out his words, "Seal the casket.’

At the mention of sealing the casket, a wave of heartache washed over Celeste.

Four pallbearers stood at each corner of the casket, hammer and nail at the ready, prepared to seal the casket at any moment.

The mourners stood in thirty neat rows, bowing in unison towards the portrait of the deceased.

The funeral director hosted the funeral.

Just as the nail was about to descend, Celeste suddenly pushed past her husband and flung herself onto the casket, sobbing,

"No, don't, don't nail it."

Tears welled up in Alger's eyes, and he covered his face, unable to hold back his sobs.

Clutching the casket, Celeste tearfully asked the hundreds of mourners, "Is there a chance, just a chance, that we got it wrong?"

That Crystal isn't really dead. There have been many cases like this, haven't there? Everyone thinks the patient is dead, but they're actually still alive, still breathing. Can we check Crystal again?"

"Celeste." Louisa held back her tears. She wanted to pull Celeste aside, but seeing her cry so desperately, she couldn't bring herself to do it.

"L can feel that Crystal isn't dead. She doesn't want to be suffocated inside there. She's begging me for help."

Hope filled Celeste's words as she pleaded with those around her, "Let's open the casket and check again."

Maybe a miracle will happen!"

Her darling daughter had already given them a sign by "making it snow", she must have the ability to open her eyes again.

"Madam, let the deceased rest in peace,' the funeral director advised, "Opening the casket again would be disrespectful."

"No, she's not dead. How can she be considered deceased? Please believe me. She's really still alive. Let's just open it and see."

As she spoke, a thought struck Celeste, and she turned to look for a slender figure behind her.

Upon seeing Arabella, she exclaimed excitedly, "Bella, out of everyone here, I trust you the most. Can you help me see if Crystal is still alive? We'll open the casket, and you just have to take a look, okay?"

Filled with compassion, Arabella was about to respond when,

"I beg you." Celeste was about to kneel.

If it weren't for Arabella catching her in time, her knees would have hit the ground.

"Please help me see if Crystal is still alive. I have this strong intuition that she can be saved. Really!"

Celeste held Arabella's

hand as she pleaded through her tears, "Good girl, help me take a look:

Arabella glanced at Alger. His eyes were filled with a glimmer of hope, as if he, like Celeste, also wished for their daughter to be alive.

Relatives of the Temple family sobbed quietly, not attempting to intervene.

All the guests were silent, lowering their heads.

The funeral director turned his face away, his eyes slightly moist.

Romeo looked at the girl's profile, seemingly predicting her decision.

"Alright."

Upon hearing Arabella's response, Celeste immediately ordered, "Open the casket."

Her voice was filled with anticipation, as if she was confident that her daughter would awaken.

The casket lid was opened, revealing Crystal dressed in her finest attire, her face peaceful. As

Arabella's hand brushed against

Crystal's wrist, she felt how soft her skin had become.

This phenomenon was known as “postmortem lividity”.

After death, the body lost all muscle tension, resulting in the relaxation and softening of the muscles throughout the body.

Not just soft, her skin was also cold to the touch. The kind of "deathly cold" that only a corpse would exhibit.

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