

# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1301

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Chapter 1301

Bard nodded, understanding the gravity of the situation. "To have Romeo stand up for you and come all this way on your behalf, it just goes to show how deep your bond is."

Off to the side, Gordon's eyes dimmed with a tinge of jealousy. The car ride earlier nearly suffocated him with their display of affection.

"Besides this, how has he been treating you in private?" Bard inquired, peering at his niece with concern.

He had heard a thing or two about Romeo's reputation and worried that his innocent and kind-hearted niece might be at a disadvantage.

"Like, does he treat you differently than others? Is he loyal to you? Can he resist temptations from the outside world? Does he take extra care of you in daily life? Is he willing to change for you? Can he sense your moods and provide the utmost understanding and share your troubles?"

"He does all of that," Arabella assured with conviction, surprising her uncle a bit.

"He not only invests emotionally, but he also goes out of his way to support my career. He takes care of the smallest details in our life, always puts me first, and strives to be the best, not wanting to disappoint me. He gives me a sense of security and wants to be by my side, no matter the circumstance."

Bard hadn't expected his niece to hold Romeo in such high regard. It seemed the two were truly devoted to each other.

He chuckled, "This is the first time I've heard you praise someone like this. It looks like he's doing a great job. I can rest easy now. Once all this mess is over, bring him over to the house, and we'll properly thank him."

"And please, Uncle Bard, don't forget about Gordon. He got hurt earlier trying to protect me.

Gordon, overhearing the mention of his name, felt an unexpected flutter in his heart.

"Are you injured?" Bard turned his attention to Gordon, now understanding why he'd looked pale and under the weather since arriving.

"It's nothing serious, sir. Ms. Bella has already treated it, and Mr. Romeo helped too,' Gordon reassured.

"You should go back and rest."

"Sir, we still haven't gotten to the bottom of Mr. Elliot's case"

"That can wait. Let him stew for a bit longer."

Bard intended to make Mr. Elliot sweat.

"Go on back. Bella and I have more to discuss."

Once Gordon had excused himself, Bard had Arabella sip some hot tea before they went down to the basement to confront Mr. Elliot.

Seeing them approach, Mr. Elliot struggled desperately. "Sir, please, I beg you to spare my family. I'll tell you everything I know!"

Someone brought over a chair for Bard, and he sat down, expressionless, as he questioned the captive.

"Do you remember, a few years back, same kind of weather. We were on a business trip to the Gatlin Mountains, and we were ambushed. You risked your life to save me. Was that deliberate, or did you genuinely want to save me?"

Mr. Elliot, tears streaming down, admitted with shame, "Back then, I indeed wanted to earn your trust."

"So, every time you 'saved' me, every task you did on my behalf, was it all just to deliver a fatal blow when the time was right?"

"I was just following orders. Sir, I confess. It was me who placed Bowen, Arthur, and those four maids inside the house to seize the opportunity to kill Mr. Darren and you. It was Alexander of Mafia Rock who ordered me to do it! Bard remained silent, his thoughts unreadable.

"Sir, I have a secret, worth the lives of my entire family. You'll definitely want to know this secret! It's about your wife."

At the mention of his wife, Bard's gaze sharpened.

"Let my family go, and I'll tell you everything I know, including where your wife is!"

Bard's emotions roiled. Could it be possible that his wife was still alive?

How could that be?

"You better start talking,' one of Bard's men threatened, gripping Mr. Elliot's throat tighter.

Mr. Elliot, bound by ropes, was nearly gasping for air.

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Arabella's eyes widened in surprise. Did she actually have an aunt she didn't know about?

She watched as Mr. Elliot turned a shade of tomato red, the veins in his neck bulging, his eyes about to roll back in his head from the chokehold.

"Enough, Bard's voice cut through the tension like a knife.

He needed to know where his wife was.

How could she possibly be alive?

After all, they had combed through every inch of the land with no trace to be found.

As his henchman released his grip, Mr. Elliot gasped for air, taking a while to catch his breath before he managed to speak. "Sir, your wife fell off the cliff that year, and the sea was below. Sir, you had men searching the waters for over a month, but we never found her body. The truth is, she didn't fall into the sea, but onto a tree. She was badly injured and unconscious, and I took her to Alexander's place."

Hearing this, Bard shot to his feet and ordered the basement door to be flung open.

He stormed in, kicking Mr. Elliot to the ground and grabbing him by the collar in a furious grip. "You knew how much she means to me, and you dared to keep this from me for so long, and even had the audacity to send her away. I should make you regret ever crossing me!"

The thought of his wife being at Alexander's was like a knife to his heart.

Mr. Elliot knew the gravity of his actions, and although he too felt the weight of Bard's sorrow, he was bound to obey.

What the master commanded, he did.

Trembling, Mr. Elliot confessed, "Initially, Alexander only wanted to use your wife as leverage, to threaten you and break you by

taking away your beloved. But then he fell for her, and he wouldn't let her go."

"What did you say?" Bard, nearly losing his sanity with rage, clenched his fists, ready to strike.

"But Alexander has respected your wife. He hasn't laid a finger on her, I swear.' Mr. Elliot pleaded urgently.

"If she's been harmed in any way, I'll come back and tear you limb from limb!" Bard stormed out of the basement, with Arabella casting a glance at Mr. Elliot before quickly catching up with her uncle.

She had never seen him so incensed.

"Uncle Bard, are you going to confront Alexander?" Arabella asked as they walked briskly.

"Bella, I'll leave the hospital to you. Tonight, I'm bringing your aunt home. Take care of your grandpa and don't let those vultures get to him' Bard commanded without breaking stride. He couldn't trust any of his men now, except for his own niece.

And she was the only one capable enough to ensure grandpa's safety.

Perhaps it was the shock of his wife still being alive, but Bard's eyes shone with a steely resolve mixed with a thirst for vengeance.

Determined to bring her back, and furious that Alexander dared to cross him, he would not let this go lightly.

Arabella understood that her uncle would stop at nothing to settle the score with Mr. Elliot for keeping the truth about her aunt hidden.

Tonight, Dawnstar would not know peace.

From this point on, the world would likely hear no more of Alexander and his so-called 'kingdom'.

To prevent Alexander's men from targeting her grandfather, Arabella decided to stay at the hospital for the night to ensure his protection.

After all, the hospital's security didn't hold a candle to her own skills.

She stepped outside, umbrella in hand, only to find Gordon still sitting in his car, not yet departed.

Gordon was taken aback when he saw her, quickly getting out of the car to inquire, "Ms. Bella, what's going on?"

Mr. Bard left in a hurry, and here you are following suit."

He had an inkling something significant was unfolding, but the specifics eluded him.

Arabella locked eyes with him, "Why haven't you left yet?"



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Gordon glanced at her before shifting his gaze elsewhere, "I'm hurt. I need to rest in the car for a bit"

"Uncle Bard's wife is still alive." Arabella didn't hide anything. Looking straight into his eyes, she enunciated each word, "She's with Alexander. Uncle Bard has gone to demand her release. To prevent their people from storming the hospital, I need to go there and watch over Grandpa.

“Mrs. Griffith is still alive? Can it be true?” Gordon was taken aback. After all the effort back in the day, scouring high and low, and they hadn't found her, only for her to end up with Alexander.

It looked like tonight, it wasn't just Alexander who would pay the price, but all his men would be skinned alive.

Hiding such a big secret from the boss, they really must be tired of living.

“Ms. Bella, let me take you to the hospital,” Gordon said as he came back to reality, offering to help.

“There's no need, Uncle Bard asked you to rest.”

“An extra assistant is always helpful, especially tonight. It's not like any other night. Your Grandpa's life is the top priority, we can't afford any oversights. Let me accompany you, and I'll also call in some extra help to ensure your and Mr. Darren's safety”

Gordon insisted, even going so far as to open the car door for her, urging her to get in.

Seeing his determination, Arabella got into the car. Gordon was somewhat pleased and hurried to start the car.

The VIP floor of the hospital was so quiet one could only hear the sound of the receptionist flipping through patient files.

As soon as the elevator doors opened, a bunch of bodyguards tensed up, hands reaching for their concealed blades, eyes fierce and unyielding, fixed on the elevator doors.

Seeing Arabella and Gordon step out, they quickly hid their weapons and bowed respectfully, "Ms. Bella, Gordon, what brings you here?"

"I've got Jeni and Buss leading teams over here too. Everyone be on high alert tonight, and after tonight, you can all rest easy."

Hearing Gordon's words, his men looked puzzled, "Gordon, what happened?"

Gordon shot him a look, "Don't ask what you don't need to know."

"Yes, sir."

Arabella headed towards the ward, with the on-call doctor and nurse following, "Ms. Bella, you're here."

"How's Grandpa doing today?"

"All good, just like you predicted. All his vital signs are within the normal range. Ms. Bella, your medical skills are truly impressive.

You could save him after he was injected with that substance."

"I just happened to be on the scene"

If not for the timely intervention, even a minute later might have been too late.

"Oh, right, here's Mr. Darren's report from today, the doctor handed the paperwork to Arabella.

"Leave us,' Arabella said as she took the report and pushed open the ward door. Darren was sleeping peacefully.

The four bodyguards inside the room, about to salute her, were silenced by Arabella's soft command, "Don't wake Grandpa"

"Yes, ma'am; they whispered back, resuming their statue-like vigil in each corner of the room.

Arabella made sure Darren's blanket was snug and then sat by the bed, quietly flipping through the report.

As Gordon finished giving instructions and entered the room, he caught sight of Arabella's serious profile.

Under the dim light, every little movement of hers captivated him.

"Gordon"

It was only when a bodyguard greeted him softly that he snapped out of his reverie, realizing he had lost his composure.

Fortunately, Arabella had been absorbed in the report and hadn't looked up.

Gordon felt his face warm up, turning to his men, "You guys keep watch outside. Ms. Bella and I are enough here."

"Yes, sir' the four bodyguards stepped out.

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The hospital room was quiet except for Arabella and Gordon, the only two remaining in the soft hum of the sterile space.

Gordon stole a glance at the girl's striking profile, his heart hammering in his chest. He quickly averted his gaze, his voice laced

with nervousness, "Ms. Bella, I'm here if you need anything. You can rest after you're done with the report"

"I'm not tired."

"Should I get you a glass of water?"

"I'm not thirsty." Arabella flipped to the third page of the report, her eyelids never lifting.

"Maybe I can have some food brought in."

"No need." Arabella's voice was drawling, "Gordon, if you're really that bored, just play some games on your phone, but keep it down, will you?"

Gordon's cheeks flushed a shade of red as he nodded and complied.

He wondered how the situation was faring on Mr. Griffith's end.

Unable to resist, he took another peek at Arabella.

Even in the dim light, her beauty was captivating.

Time seemed to slow until Arabella eventually drifted off to sleep. Gordon fetched a spare blanket,

intending to cover her gently,

but even the slightest rustle reached Arabella's ears, prompting her to instinctively lash out in self-defense.

"Ms. Bella, it's chilly. I didn't want you to catch cold."

Gordon stammered, after receiving an unintended slap.

Upon seeing the blanket in his hands, Arabella murmured an apology.

So close to her, Gordon could see the porcelain smoothness of her skin and her long lashes. His heartbeat was thunderous, and

realizing his own awkwardness, he quickly said, "It's alright, I'll wait outside"

After handing her the blanket, he hurried onto the balcony.

The next morning dawned.

Arabella was awakened by the sound of a phone call. As she lifted her gaze, she realized she had fallen asleep at some point, now wrapped in a soft, fuzzy blanket.

Looking towards the balcony, she saw the person there had finished their call and instinctively glanced her way.

Their eyes met briefly before Gordon quickly looked away.

He opened the balcony door, and the brisk, snowy air rushed in.

"Ms. Bella, you're up. Mr. Griffith said Mrs. Griffith made it home safely. There's no need to stay at the hospital.

Shall I take you back?"

"My aunt's back?" Arabella rose from her seat, "Alright, I'll go see her."

Her aunt had been staying with the enemy for so long. Arabella worried about her aunt's wellbeing and the severity of any possible injuries.

After checking on the elderly patient in the bed and finding nothing amiss, Arabella prepared to leave.

Passing by Gordon, she could feel the chill emanating from him. She glanced up, "Did you stay out on the balcony all night?"

"Ah-choo!" Gordon, caught off guard that Arabella noticed such a small detail, explained, "It's not proper for a man and a woman to stay in the same room. I didn't want Mr. McMillian to get the wrong idea."

Arabella nodded, "Well, make sure to take some cold medicine when you get back."

"Will do."

Gordon snuck another glance at her retreating figure, though in truth, it was because being alone with her made his heart race too fiercely. He needed to step outside to calm his nerves.

Half an hour later.

As Arabella returned to the manor, Bard was just coming downstairs.

"Bella, you had a rough night. Your aunt is back safe and sound, and she's already resting. You should get some sleep too," he said with concern.

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"How was last night?" Arabella's voice had barely faded when she noticed Bard's left hand wrapped in a bandage.

"Just a scratch, nothing serious. Your aunt's safe return is worth far more than this. I'd take a hundred more wounds for that."

Bard summarized the previous night's skirmish with a single sentence, "Mafia Rock is history now."

Arabella understood, "Is my aunt okay? Should I go check on her?"

"She's fine,' Bard's eyes softened as he spoke of his wife. "Frank caught some shady characters lurking nearby.

They're locked up now. I'm going to check it out. If they're part of Alexander's remnants, I won't let them off easy.

"I'm coming with you."

Arabella followed Bard, and from a distance, she saw Frank standing guard at the basement door. Upon seeing Bard and Arabella, Frank greeted them with respect.

"Sir, Ms. Bella, these are the same guys who clashed with us over the diner last time. They were the ones who threatened us, saying that even the almighty wouldn't stand in their boss's way. They said if their boss was pleased, she might spare us 'mutts' our lives, but if not, we'd be the ones without a place to rest in peace."

Bard recalled the incident.

Last time Frank had asked who their boss was, and the reply was cheeky.

At that moment, one of the captives woke up.

Hearing Bard's order for interrogation, the man blurted out, "Where is this? Do you think this shabby room can hold me? Wait until I get out of here and show you."

That familiar voice and tone made Arabella push through the crowd for a better look. It was Jack!

Jack was stunned to see her, "Boss, you came to rescue me so soon! I knew you wouldn't abandon me."

Bard, Frank, and Gordon exchanged bewildered glances. If they weren't mistaken, this guy just called Arabella "boss"?

What was going on?

Feeling her husband's gaze, Arabella smiled and interjected, "Friendly fire."

"You, you, you're saying I'm on the same side as this guy?" Jack was in disbelief.

Frank was equally surprised. The person who had beaten him and his subordinates black and blue last time was one of Ms.

Bella's subordinates.

"Bella, what other secrets are you keeping? What else don't I know?" Bard asked with a teasing smile.

Jack was shocked. It was like a family feud, but could it be that the silver-masked man was Bard's subordinate?

Talk about a misunderstanding.

Eventually, Jack and his crew were released, and Arabella revealed her "Mr. Bryant" identity to Bard.

"You're Mr. Bryant?" Bard was astounded.

No wonder he found the fighting style of the girl he saw previously so familiar. It was the same person! He never thought Mr.

Bryant to be a girl. After all, the last time he saw Mr. Bryant was Mr. Bryant dressed in a black suit like a man.

"Uncle Bard, my boss has had a tough life. She became our leader to protect us, to keep us from being pushed around. Don't think badly of her because of her identity. She's done a lot of good in her life."

Jack affectionately called Bard 'uncle' and didn't forget to add, "Uncle Bard, we're hungry."

"You sure make yourself at home,' Arabella teased.

"Ain't your home ours too?" Jack chuckled.

Bard laughed heartily, "I'll have the kitchen whip up something. Frank didn't go easy on you, did he? No serious injuries, I hope."

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# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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"Like he's any match for us." Jack glanced over at Frank with a smirk.

If Frank hadn't pulled that sneaky move and knocked them out cold, who knew who would have come out on top?

Frank bit back the urge to give Jack a thorough pounding after hearing that.

On their way to the restaurant, Jack was utterly gobsmacked by Bard's lavish estate, his compliments spilling out one after another, much to Bard's amusement, who laughed heartily, clearly in high spirits.

Bard, still chuckling, told them to make themselves at home and take a look around before turning to Arabella, "Bella, come with me for a moment, would you?"

Arabella shot Jack a look that said 'behave yourself before following Bard's steps.

"Bella, do you remember that a long time ago, you saved me?" he asked.

Arabella was taken aback, seemingly unable to recall the event.

"Back then, I'd heard about a place by you guys. It is full of miraculous herbs. Since a bunch of top-notch doctors couldn't do a thing for your grandparents, I decided to take a risk and have a look, hoping to find something worthwhile, so I led a group there.

Even though I'd heard the place was a bit rough, I thought we'd be safe with enough hands. I didn't expect to walk into an ambush. You were the one who showed up and saved every last one of us. I didn't lose a single man."

Now it clicked for Arabella. In those times, several powerful factions dominated the area, and countless unknown groups sprouted up like mushrooms after the rain, all vying for territory and resources.

Anyone unfamiliar who stepped foot in there became a target.

Arabella had intervened when she saw her uncle's men cornered — not just out of solidarity for a fellow Solterran, but also to set an example to the other factions. Those under her protection were untouchable.

"Turns out, our paths had crossed long before, Bard said with a warm gaze, "Considering even my men couldn't stay there long, how did you manage all these years? I heard from Jack that you've been through a lot."

"It's nothing. Which young person hasn't faced hardships?"

"The Collins and the Griffith families owe you so much, allowing you to go through all those trials for no good reason,' Bard said, his voice tinged with guilt.

"But it's those very trials that have shaped a better me. You shouldn't blame yourself, Uncle Bard."

Thanks to those experiences, she had met influential people, learned invaluable skills, and was able to help many more.

Bard realized she was truly understanding and possessed a broad perspective. He looked at her with admiration and fondness.

"Louisa would be proud to have a daughter like you."  
In the afternoon.

After Jack and his crew headed back, it wasn't long before he called Arabella.

"Boss, those guys in black at the restaurant have finally spilled the beans. They're not Alexander's men. They came for you."

Arabella was somewhat surprised.

"They had no idea that the man dining with you that night was Dawnstar's big shot Bard Griffith. They said if they had known, they wouldn't have dared make a move in his presence. Now, they're being hunted down. They're at a dead end!"

Arabella listened quietly as he continued.

"They're saying they'll spill everything they know, just asking for safe passage back home in exchange for their lives""

After all, crossing Bard on his own turf either meant safe passage home, or they'd rather Jack lock them up for life than face certain death outside.

"Boss, are they out of their minds? Just think about it. Why on earth would we cross Bard for a few lowlifes like them? Lucky for us, Bard's your uncle. I pretended to agree to their terms and got some intel out of them.

Someone's put a bounty on your head, a hefty one. I've got people back home looking into it, and I'm sure we'll have answers soon."

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Arabella's gaze deepened with intrigue. Who could possibly want her dead?

Before Arabella could voice her thoughts, Jack blurted out, "Boss, who's the knucklehead that put a price on your head? The whole industry knows you're not someone to mess with, given your skills and status. Who'd pull such a bone-headed move?"

Pausing, Jack couldn't help but probe further, "Boss, you tick anyone off lately?"

Arabella's voice carried a lazy drawl, tinged with a hint of nonchalance, "Too many to keep track."

In her line of work, making enemies was par for the course.

Some folks believed in the long game, holding grudges for years. Maybe it was an old adversary stirring trouble.

"But this time, I got a hunch these guys aren't the same ones after Carol. After all, their power's too strong to bother with bounties to take you down."

At the mention of Carol.

Arabella inquired, "How's Carol doing, anyway?"

"She's on the mend. Couple days back, she went solo to apologize to the Temple family. They weren't having any of it, told her to stay gone. Then, there was this one time Celeste was visiting her daughter's grave, got so overwhelmed with grief she passed out. Carol took her to the hospital, left without giving her name."

Arabella was surprised by the turn of events, "What about Celeste's staff?"

"Crystal's grave's close to the Temple estate.

Celeste always walks there alone, probably wants some private time to talk to her daughter." Jack speculated.

Arabella probed further, "So, the Temples cooled off yet?"

"It ain't that easy. Though Carol's back in her ancestral fold, there's the issue with her biological family." Jack's voice trailed off,

heavy with implication.

Arabella, sensing the discomfort in his tone, pressed, "What's up?"

She recalled Jack sending her details on Carol's birth family but hadn't had the chance to review them. Now, it seemed there were complications.

"Carol's birth mother spent years searching for her missing kids to no avail, passed away from illness long ago.

Her dad remarried, had twins who are now eighteen. So when Carol and her brother Dennis showed up out of the blue, the stepmom wasn't exactly welcoming."

It was a clear threat to the family inheritance, wasn't it?

"So, Carol's finding it tough with her own folks,' Arabella said, a touch of empathy in her voice.

"Not exactly tough. She's living with Clark, just visits her family now and then. But fitting in? That'll take some time"

Understanding Jack's point, Arabella had a clearer picture now.

Just then, a servant knocked, "Ms. Bella, are you resting? Mrs. Griffith has awakened and wishes to see you."

Arabella ended her call and opened the door, asking, "You mean my aunt's awake?"

"Yes, Ms. Bella, are you available now?"

"I am."

"Please follow me."

As the servant led the way, Arabella remembered their first encounter. She had arrived empty-handed and now, on the spur of the moment, she wasn't sure what to bring her aunt. She had only prepared a gift for her uncle before because she had never known she had an aunt. It must have been because everyone thought Bard's wife was gone, and the painful memory was never brought up.

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Chapter 1308

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# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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Arabella followed the housekeeper into the living room, where she caught sight of a stunning figure standing before the floor-to-ceiling windows.

She was dressed in a chic silk robe, exuding elegance and sensuality, with her short, wavy chestnut hair giving off a vibe of sophistication.

"Ma'am, Ms. Bella has arrived."

Eunice Griffith turned around, her striking features bold and vivacious. With her arms crossed over her chest, she radiated a powerful presence, yet carried it with undeniable flair.

Contrary to the delicate and gentle image Arabella had envisioned, her aunt's beauty was aggressive and provocative, like a thorny, mesmerizing rose, vibrant and dazzling.

"So, you're Arabella?" Eunice lifted the corners of her lips, her aura and poise perfectly balanced. She smiled warmly at Arabella,

"Come here, let me have a look at you."

Arabella stepped forward and greeted her aunt.

Eunice scrutinized her from head to toe, her alluring eyes filled with approval, "You do bear some resemblance to Louisa, but you have a stronger presence, and you certainly catch the eye."

"Thank you for the compliment, Eunice.

Eunice's red lips curled into a smile, "I've heard from your uncle that, despite your young age, you're not only a medical prodigy

and a top scholar but also skilled in self-defense, and you even have a retinue of loyal followers."

Suddenly, Gordon burst into the room, and the housekeeper, unable to stop him, apologized with a bowed head, "I'm so Sorry, ma'am, I couldn't stop him."

"It's fine." Eunice's captivating eyes held a hint of nonchalance as she turned to Gordon, "What's the matter?"

She seemed to always be in control, as if everything was within her grasp.

"Ma'am, although the people you've brought back are fiercely loyal to you, they were once Alexander's men. If there's a seed of vengeance in them."

"Gordon, you worry too much' Eunice interjected confidently, "If I dared to bring them here, I trust them. They won't do anything to

hurt Bard or the Griffith family. I know you're devoted to this house. Rest assured, they are on the same side as you, with aligned ambitions."

With Eunice's reassurance, Gordon immediately bowed, "My apologies for my concerns and for interrupting your leisure, ma'am."

"You always have the Griffith family's best interests at heart, which is a joy for me and for the family. Someone, instruct the staff to double Gordon's salary this month."

Gordon was stunned by the sudden doubling of his pay, completely flabbergasted.

Arabella's respect for her aunt soared. Eunice had expected to be on her own in "enemy territory," yet here was she, having won over many of Alexander's followers, ensuring their loyalty.

It was clear Eunice was no ordinary woman.

Once Gordon had left, Eunice's gaze returned to Arabella, her tone softening again, "I came back in such a hurry that I haven't

had the chance to prepare a welcome gift for you.

Let's go to the mall later and pick something out."

Before Arabella could refuse, Eunice added, "No refusals. It's been a while since I had a day out shopping.

Consider it keeping me company, a favor to me."

Arabella smiled, "Alright."

"There's my good girl." Eunice affectionately tapped Arabella's nose, her eyes filled with indulgence, "I'll go change my clothes then."

"Wait, Arabella called out to her.

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Chapter 1309

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Eunice couldn't quite put her finger on it, but she felt a wave of relief when Arabella's slender fingers rested on her wrist,



checking her pulse. She let out a chuckle, "Well? What do you think?"

Arabella was taken aback, not expecting her aunt to be in such great shape.

"It seems you have been living the high life."

"Of course, I can't just sit around waiting to wither away. I'm convinced their schemes will unravel eventually, just like a secret too big to keep. Until then, my job is to stay radiant and collect their misdeeds, turning their allies to my side."

Arabella had to admire her aunt's savvy. Eunice was a woman who knew how to adapt, to protect herself, and had plenty of smarts.

Eunice was truly the perfect match for Bard. They were like a power couple straight out of a superhero movie.

"See you in a bit." Eunice flashed Arabella a knowing smile before gracefully ascending the staircase.

For some reason, spending time with Aunt Eunice felt like a breath of fresh spring air. It was invigorating and refreshing.

Meanwhile, on the other side of town.

Serena had been racking her brain and decided she couldn't just sit back and do nothing. So, she went to find Louisa and cooed,

"Mom, Martin's been tied up with a big deal in Dawnstar, hasn't been home in ages. He's been asking me to visit, and I was thinking, maybe I should go, check in on Grandpa and Aunt Eunice too."

She wrapped her arms around Louisa's, playing the doting daughter, "I heard Aunt Eunice's back, and I can only imagine how much she's been through. There are things she might not feel comfortable telling Uncle Bard. If I go, she'd have someone else to confide in"

Perhaps fearing Louisa's refusal, Serena added while swinging her mom's hand gently, "Please, let me go.

Grandpa adored me, and Aunt Eunice was always so kind. It just doesn't sit right with me, staying here doing nothing."

Louisa chuckled helplessly, "I think you're just missing Martin and itching to see him. Alright, alright, you can go.

I won't stop you. But how will you travel? Will you take the family jet or a commercial flight?"

Seeing her mother finally agree, Serena beamed with joy, "Martin said he'd send a plane for me."

"Martin's so good to you, darling. I'm glad. I'll rest easy knowing you're with him,' Louisa said with satisfaction.

"Invite him over when he's less busy. We should get to know him better."

Serena thought cynically, "Hmph, she probably wants to set up a scene where Romeo outshines Martin, to give her biological daughter a boost and leave me, the adoptive one, embarrassed."

Although Serena believed she had guessed Louisa's intent and felt uncomfortable, she maintained a sweet demeanor and agreed.

When it was time to leave, Louisa packed a variety of expensive gifts for Serena to take as presents. Halfway to the airport, Serena instructed Erik, the driver, to deliver the gifts to Martha instead. Martha would sell them discreetly, with the proceeds going straight into Serena's private account.

As for the presents, she planned to have Martin foot the bill for new ones. That way, she'd have extra cash in her account and still show up with gifts. It was the perfect plan. Dawnstar's most prestigious Style Plaza was a haven for luxury brands.

Upon landing, Serena headed straight there, wielding Martin's credit card like a queen, splurging on designer bags worth tens of

thousands and jewelry worth even more. If it caught her eye, it was hers.

Martin, in the midst of a meeting, noticed his phone lighting up with notification after notification of

Serena's shopping spree. His

eyes softened. She was finally using his card.

After a shopping spree, Serena had the salespeople ship the haul to a domestic address, planning to

have Martha secretly sell

the goods in exchange for cold, hard cash.

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Chapter 1310

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# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1310

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Chapter 1310

The sales associates could barely contain their smiles, bustling about as they packed up the items and arranged for delivery, squatting down now and then to rub Serena's legs. Perched regally on the sofa, Serena sipped the coffee handed to her by a salesperson and wrinkled her nose in distaste. "This coffee isn't even as good as what my maid at home drinks."

Nicola, the salesperson, nodded enthusiastically, heaping on the flattery. "You're so generous with your spending. It's clear you don't come from an ordinary family. I bet your servant's salary is higher than ours. We're just wage earners, and without the little extra you're letting slip through your fingers, we wouldn't meet our targets this month."

"Indeed, we're so grateful you graced us with your presence. Otherwise, we'd be facing termination this month; Guti chimed in, diligently massaging Serena's shoulders, and couldn't help but gossip, "Young lady, is it your family or your boyfriend who spoils you with the card?"

Serena airily mentioned it was her boyfriend, which prompted a new wave of compliments and envy from the sales team, praising her for having such a generous boyfriend.

Serena couldn't help but bask in the glory.

"If your boyfriend is so willing to spoil you, why not try these boots?" Aurora interjected, hastily donning gloves to fetch a pair in

Serena's size from the new arrivals that had come in just yesterday. "These are exclusive. Only one pair per size, and with your dainty feet, you'll look much more elegant than the other ladies."

She knelt down and carefully slipped the boots onto Serena's feet. Serena relished the royal treatment, glancing at her reflection in the mirror.

"Not bad, go ahead and pack them too, she said, handing over the card. "The PIN is 123456."

Aurora was taken aback by Serena's decisiveness.

There wasn't a second of hesitation. "These boots are different from your

other purchases. They are designed by a renowned fashion designer and are quite pricey, costing ninety-nine thousand dollars."

Ninety-nine thousand dollar boots would have once made Serena hesitate.

But today, she was shopping with Martin's card, and after all, it was Martin who had begged her repeatedly to use it.

So she felt no burden at all, even challenging Aurora with a raised eyebrow, "I've already bought things worth over a million, so what's ninety-nine thousand to me? Do you think I can't afford it?"

"Of course not, you've misunderstood"

"You're the most lavish lady we've ever seen."

"Envious, truly. Just your aura speaks of nobility, and to have such a doting boyfriend, not to mention your beauty. It's almost unfair."

"You're now our store's top VIP. Anything you desire, other customers must step aside."

At that moment, Serena caught sight of a familiar figure in the distance. Squinting, she realized it was Arabella.

What was she doing shopping in this store?

Given that the store was a global flagship and spanned three floors, Serena hadn't noticed Arabella until now.

There was Arabella, elegantly holding a dress, starkly alone compared to Serena's surrounding crowd, not a single sales associate in sight!

It must be that Uncle Bard was too busy to mind her, and she'd snuck out for a bit of shopping on her own.

Serena's lips curled into a smirk, turning to Guti,  
"Didn't you just say I'm your store's top VIP? That I  
have first dibs on anything I

fancy? I want that dress she's holding!"

Guti followed her gaze to see a pretty girl holding a  
dress from yesterday's new arrivals.

The dress was expensive, likely out of reach for the  
average person.

Seeing that Arabella's attire was less flashy than  
Serena's, Guti muttered a 'just one moment' and  
went over to negotiate.

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