

# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1481

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"Yes, let's head inside, Romeo. I've got some snacks and drinks ready for you guys. Come on in," Louisa said warmly, linking arms with Arabella as they walked, chatting with Romeo about their memories in

Dawnstar and reminding Arabella to check in with her uncle.

The coffee table was adorned with an assortment of pastries, coffee and tea.

"Bella, your mom made all these. They might not look like much, but I've tasted them, and they're pretty

decent." Kenneth said with a smile, picking up a plate of the best-looking lemon bars and presenting them to Romeo and Arabella, "Give them a try." "And we've got some lavender shortbread too!" Louisa reached for another plate of treats. But before she could bring it over, Kenneth intercepted, "Let the kids try the lemon bars first." "Why not let them try the shortbread too?" "They can have a piece later on." "They could have a bite of the lemon bars and then the shortbread. It won't hurt." "There's no rush."

Despite Kenneth's cheerful demeanor, Arabella could tell from his expression that the lavender shortbread might not be up to par.

"Then how about trying my rose puffed pastry?" Louisa brought over another plate of sweets.

Once again, Kenneth took over, saying, "Let them finish the lemon bars first, no hurry. Romeo, Bella, how are they? The texture's alright, isn't it?" Arabella found the treat a bit tough to swallow but nodded anyway, "Sure." Romeo also offered praise, "Delicious, with a unique twist from Mrs. Collins." "Really? I managed to put a personal spin on lemon bars?" Louisa's joy was evident, and she didn't forget to serve her homemade fruit tea, "Try this. I cut every piece of fruit myself. See if it's to your liking." "She's been a bit idle at home these days and stumbled upon some videos on her phone about moms getting creative with their kids' meals. She felt like she wasn't doing enough for her kids, so she's been

experimenting with recipes, turning everyone at home into guinea pigs," Kenneth explained.

Some of the staff had initially suffered some digestive repercussions. Better left unsaid.

Arabella took a sip of the fruit tea and almost choked. She nodded, "It's not bad. There's still room for improvement."

Louisa looked expectantly at Romeo. After taking a sip, Romeo finally understood the expression Arabella had earlier. He chuckled, "It's quite the melange, distinctive, and refreshing." "Really?" Louisa took a sip herself, "At first, I thought something was off."

"Maybe there's a bit too much lemon." All three said in unison, and then glanced at each other, with

Kenneth quickly smoothing things over, "It must be that the recipe writer didn't specify the exact quantity to use."

"But they did, they said one slice of lemon was enough. I just thought Bella loved lemon water, so I added a bit more."

Arabella was touched that her mother remembered her preferences, her gaze softening once more.

"Bella, from now on, I will make you delicious food more often."

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As soon as Louisa finished speaking, Kenneth quickly interjected, “Hold up, hold up. The kid’s gotten used to the chef’s cooking. Besides, the chef knows all about nutritional balance. They’ve got so much on their plate these days. They need all the nutrients they can get. And they certainly hope that at your age, you should be sitting back and enjoying the easy life.”

“Are you saying my cooking is not up to scratch?” Louisa suddenly asked.

“No, not at all, my dear. Even if you burned it to a crisp, I’d still find it delicious! After all, it’s made with your hard work.”

“Cut it out, you!” Louisa playfully swatted him, “Flatterer.”

Kenneth chuckled, “Love is blind.”

“Oh, please, what’s love got to do with it.”

The family chatted and laughed together for a while before Louisa remembered a new gadget she had bought - a massage hammer.

“Bella, let me give you a shoulder rub. Your aunt told me you’ve been really busy at Dawnstar.”

Even though Louisa didn’t fully grasp what was keeping her daughter so occupied, or the dangers she might be facing, the concern in Eunice’s voice made her want to tend to her daughter’s weary shoulders.

“Honey, let me give you a massage too.” Kenneth also started kneading Louisa’s shoulders, “You’ve been cooking up a storm, and you must be exhausted.”

Romeo watched the harmonious scene unfold before his eyes, his gaze softening. It turned out that even in wealthy families, not everything was broken and disjointed. During dinner, Kenneth and Louisa kept piling food onto Arabella’s plate, having not seen her in days and especially after the slanderous attacks on the AR-BI-Clear Group, they were deeply concerned about the stress and hardship their young daughter was facing. They showered her with affection and care.

Feeling left out, Serena made a pointed effort to serve Arabella some food to make a good impression on their parents.

Romeo chimed in to break the tension, “Bella’s had her fill of seafood lately.” With that, Arabella passed the shrimp Serena had put in her bowl over to her mother, “Mom, you have some.”

Not to be outdone, Serena served Arabella some beef.

“Bella’s been suffering from indigestion. She should avoid rich, heavy foods.”

As soon as Romeo finished speaking, Arabella transferred the beef from her bowl to her father’s, “Dad, you eat this.”

Serena couldn’t hold back, “Then what can sis eat? Let me help you to get it.”

“No need, just continue with your food.” Arabella didn’t even give her a second glance.

Serena’s face fell in disappointment. She dutifully served her parents and even stole a glance at Romeo,

“Romeo can serve himself, make sure to eat plenty.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Collins, please have more also.” Romeo ignored her comment and turned to Kenneth and

Louisa, “Thanks for preparing such a wonderful meal for me tonight.”

“There’s no need for formalities with us, kiddo. Come by for dinner more often when you can,” Kenneth invited warmly.

“Absolutely,” Louisa agreed with a smile, “come when you get time. Don’t feel shy.” Seeing her own dismay go unnoticed, Serena felt even more irked.

Finally, as the meal came to an end and a servant was about to bring out a fruit platter to the living room,

Serena hastily offered, “Let me do that.”

She was eager to redeem herself in Romeo’s eyes.

Before the servant could respond, she was already presenting the fruit platter to her parents with a dutiful smile, “Mom, Dad, how about some fruit to top off the meal?”

“Where’s Sarah? Why are you bringing in the fruit?” Louisa was surprised.

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She said she doesn't feel well in her stomach, but it's alright. It's not too heavy to carry, and besides, mom and dad shouldn't fret over me chipping in with the chores."

After her parents finished their dessert, Serena was about to offer the fruit platter to Romeo when he stood up, preempting her move, "Mr. And Mrs. Collins, Bella and I are going to take a walk for a bit."

Kenneth quickly invited, "Why not have some fruit first?"

"No, thanks. I'll spend a little more time with Bella before I leave."

Kenneth turned to Arabella, "How about you, Bella? Won't you have some?"

"I'm full, thanks."

"Alright then, you two go ahead and take a walk. It's still early."

Romeo reached for Arabella's hand,  
"Didn't you tell me this afternoon that  
Hans planted some flower on  
your balcony? We can see them from the  
garden, right? Show me."

"Sure."

Watching their departing figures, Serena  
felt a pang of jealousy. After a while, she  
turned her charm back

on, coaxing her parents into good spirits,  
hoping they would take her to Mr.

Albright's birthday bash.

"Mr. Albright's birthdays have always  
been low-key affairs. It's only because  
he's turning sixty that he's  
hosting a grand party. There won't be  
another chance like this. I know I'm not  
qualified to be Mr. Albright's  
protege. I just want to experience it. Mom,  
please take me there. I heard Jamie  
Noelle will be there too.

You know how much I love playing the violin. I really hope that I can get a chance to learn from Jamie Noelle. They say the guests this year are all very influential. If I could find a great mentor, I could make our family proud, like my sister."

Louisa patted her back lovingly, "It's not that I don't want to take you, dear. Those two invitations were for your grandparents."

She and Kenneth hadn't received any. "So, can I ask grandma and grandpa to take me?" Serena asked hopefully.

"But your grandparents recently went on a trip and caught a cold, so they declined the invitation."

Louisa gently explained, "Mr. Albright has never made a big deal out of his birthdays because he didn't

want too many strangers around. The guests he's invited this time aren't many, just old friends. In other words, he's not looking to take on any mentees, nor does he want others to do so at his party. If you want to see the world, there will be other opportunities, no need to rush this one." Louisa was somewhat surprised, "In the past eighteen years, I've never heard you express interest in attending anyone's birthday party, let alone that of an elder."

"That's because I've seen my sister's incredible talents, and I want to work hard and excel just like her. If only grandpa and grandma hadn't declined."

Thinking this, Serena couldn't help but inwardly criticize her grandparents. Mr. Albright was a man of

significance, and yet they had dismissed such an important invitation. They didn't even consider if anyone else in the family might want to go. What a waste.

Now that route was a dead end, Serena was fretting over what to do next. After much thought, a name popped into her head - Martin!

She wondered if Mr. Albright had invited him. If so, she could sweet-talk Martin into taking her.

With this plan in mind, she abruptly left her parents, "Mom, dad, I'm going to take a shower!"

If she could just get into Mr. Albright's birthday party, she was sure to find a great mentor and finally outshine Arabella. Just the thought made her feel triumphant.

Feeling superior, she reflected on the fact that even if Arabella was the Collins family's beloved daughter, she didn't have the privilege to attend!

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But Serena's triumph lasted all of two fleeting seconds before her mind raced back to a scene at school.

Mr. Albright, in a very public setting, had proclaimed that Arabella's chess prowess was his tutelage at

work, and even floated the idea of Arabella succeeding him.

If Arabella truly was his protege, given their mentor-mentee bond, it stood to reason that Mr. Albright would likely extend an invite to his birthday bash.

With that thought, Serena's mood soured. It seemed Arabella's luck was infuriatingly good, having

stumbled upon Mr. Albright's guidance.

Without that stroke of fortune, Arabella probably wouldn't even know chess.

Her thoughts stewing, Serena's fingers danced over her phone, sending a WhatsApp message to Martin.

[Martin, got an invite to Mr. Albright's birthday bash? I heard he's always been low-key, celebrating quietly. Never threw a big shindig like he's doing this time. I'm head over heels for the violin, you know. I heard a bunch of venerable old-timers will be there. Hope I can get a chance to bump into Jamie Noelle and earn a few pointers. I'm not a true Collins, as you well know. If I had a real talent, I'd be in your league, Martin, and your folks might even warm up to me. I don't want the Collins family to pull strings for me. I want to impress Jamie Noelle with my violin skills, making her want to mentor me. Martin, can you help me out?]

After sending the message, Serena got a case of goosebumps.

At the last inter-university competition, Alma had bowled over the judges with her violin, earning heaps of praise for her natural gift. Perhaps that snob thought she was the bee's knees and got cocky. She even dared to challenge Arabella to a face-off onstage.

But Arabella's performance was crushing, garnering rave reviews.

Serena thought, if she could get Jamie Noelle's tutelage, her violin skills would eclipse both Arabella and Alma, and she'd be the rising star of the violin world.

Then, not just the Collins family, but everyone would look at her differently, including her aunt.

Even without the "daughter of the Collins family" label, as a maestro of the violin, she'd waltz into high society.

As for Martin, well, by then, who knew if he'd even be in her league!

With that thought, Serena allowed herself a smug smile.

Eugene Albright's birthday party was set on his private estate, rivaling a 5-star resort in grandeur and beauty.

The invitation stated 7 p.m., but the road to the estate was already lined with luxury cars worth millions

before the time. Their occupants were clearly people of wealth and stature.

The majestic gates stood wide open, the butler and a cadre of eight servants lined up to welcome the arriving guests.

Unable to sit still in the main house, Eugene himself took up a spot by the entrance, awaiting his guests.

He glanced at his watch constantly; it was nearly 7 o'clock. Those old codgers hadn't shown up yet, nor had Arabella sent him any message. He wondered if she had arrived.

With that thought, he kept peering out the gates.

The first to enter were Mr. Gardner and his granddaughter.

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As Mr. Gardner and his granddaughter were warmly greeted by the butler and eight servants, they responded with polite smiles and nods. After all, these were Eugene's staff, and no detail could be overlooked.

Having exchanged pleasantries with the servants, they looked up to see the well-dressed Eugene standing before them, uncharacteristically playing the host.

Mr. Gardner approached with a hearty chuckle, "Eugene, after all these years, you've finally decided to throw a birthday bash. As an old friend, I'm thrilled to finally wish you a happy birthday in person. Today is truly a special day, and later, we must toast properly to it!"

"In place of liquor, let's stick to water, since a young girl frowns upon me drinking," Eugene replied, his eyes twinkling with mirth.

Mr. Gardner assumed Eugene was referring to a relative and said with a laugh, "Blessed you are, to have youngsters keeping you in check. I've got my own whip-smart whipper-snapper at home, this one right here. Allow me to introduce my granddaughter, Phyllis Gardner. Come on, say hello to Mr. Albright."

"Mr. Albright, on this special day, wish you a healthy long life," Phyllis said, presenting her gift with both hands.

"Oh, you brought a gift?" Eugene extended his hands to receive it, "Thank you, thank you."

"Phyllis has been passionate about chess since she was little, with over a decade of practice. For all these years, she's admired you the most. I've told her about our friendship, but she wouldn't believe it!"

As Mr. Gardner spoke, he didn't forget to nudge his granddaughter, "See, Phyllis? I wasn't spinning yarns.

Mr. Albright and I really do go way back." Phyllis chuckled playfully, "Grandpa, for once you're not exaggerating."

"Hey now, what kind of talk is that?" Mr. Gardner grinned, "Eugene, we'll go on in and wait for you."

"Great."

As soon as Mr. Gardner left, more guests approached to exchange pleasantries with Eugene.

Seizing the moment, Mr. Gardner whispered to Phyllis, "Phyllis, when the time is right, try to catch

Eugene's attention. Find a way to make him take you on as his mentee. He's a tough cookie, you know.

Old friends' recommendations don't sway him; he has to see something in you himself, you get me?"

"Don't worry, Grandpa, I've got this in the bag," Phyllis assured him confidently. She had won her fair

share of chess competitions, and it seemed that today's birthday guests were from the older generation, with hardly any young people.

She was sure to stand out!

"Mr. Albright, it's been too long since we last met. You're looking younger by the day!" A graceful lady

approached, her smile impeccable as she took Eugene's hand, "May you happy every day, and get better with each passing year."

"Vivian, thank you," Eugene's gaze drifted to her daughter, noting the absence of her father, despite his name on the invitation.

Sensing his thoughts, she explained with a laugh, "My dad wanted to come himself, but he took a tumble and hurt his leg. He's bedridden now and didn't want to worry you, so he kept mum. He made me promise to bring his granddaughter to your birthday party. Oh, and here's the present he picked for you. You must accept it."

"Thank you, you're too kind," Eugene said, his face a mask of gratitude though he anticipated what would come next.

"Oh, and this is my daughter, my dad's adored granddaughter. Say hello to Mr. Albright."

As expected, another attempt at a recommendation.

"They grow up so fast, don't they?"

Eugene smiled affably, hiding any trace of his feelings.

"Mr. Albright, my name is Roxanne. On your birthday, I wish you everlasting life and all the happiness in the world," Roxanne said with ease and confidence.

"Thank you."

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Eugene had barely finished speaking when a few more guests approached. "Mr. Albright, it's been ages! Remember me? I'm Bluno, Bluno Marsh! Back at the chess tournament, my dad took third place, and we met backstage. I told you that when I grew up, I wanted to be a chess champion just like you, and you even complimented me."

The man speaking was a successful gentleman, whose eyes, even when smiling, held a businessman's shrewdness.

He had brought his daughter along, but before he could delve into his purpose, another guest interrupted.

"Oh Eugene, it's been so long, and you still look as dashing as ever. My late husband would've been so thrilled to see you in such high spirits."

The speaker was a well-dressed elderly lady, her eyes brimming with tears as she clutched Eugene's

hand and said, "It must have been seven or eight years since we last met. Last year, my husband fell

seriously ill and on his deathbed, he still talked about wanting to play one last game of chess with you. He

said you were the most admirable and formidable opponent he ever encountered in his lifetime."

The successful gentleman couldn't help but internally scoff at the old woman's theatrical display, which

completely overshadowed his earlier attempt to engage Eugene.

As he thought this, he reached out to shake Eugene's hand, only to be preempted by the elderly lady.

"Eugene, let me introduce someone. This is Mabel. My husband taught her everything he knew about chess. He always hoped she'd have the chance to match wits with you, as a way to fulfill his last wish. Oh dear, talking about such somber things on this joyous occasion. We can arrange a game when you're free."

The elderly lady knew how to advance by retreating. She cast a fond look at Mabel Remington.

Mabel quickly spoke up, "Mr. Albright, I'm so thrilled to be here for your 60th birthday. I finally get to meet

the respected opponent my grandfather always spoke of. Indeed, as he said, you are the epitome of vitality, an outstanding person. This was my grandfather's most treasured possession, and though many offered a handsome sum, no one could buy it from him. He made us promise to give it to you if we ever had the chance, believing only you are worthy of it."

With both hands, Mabel offered Eugene a gift box.

"This gift is far too precious for me to accept," Eugene demurred.

He had invited her grandfather to his birthday because he truly admired the man as a great chess player and had a favorable impression of him. Eugene hadn't realized he had passed away last year.

In recent years, Eugene had retreated to the countryside, living a life of leisure with a few old friends, paying less attention to the outside world. His main concern was to see Arabella succeed and carry on his legacy.

He wasn't even aware of his old friend's passing.

"Mr. Albright, please accept it. There's no one in the world more deserving than you. It's also fulfilling my grandfather's last wish. Please, take it," Mabel urged gracefully.

"Well then, I would be remiss to refuse." Eugene said, accepting the gift and gesturing, "Please, come inside."

The elderly lady gave the successful gentleman a smug look and led her granddaughter inside.

The successful gentleman, used to dominating the business world, couldn't stomach this slight. He quickly said, "Mr. Albright, I haven't yet introduced my daughter, Lindsay Marsh." "Nice to meet you." Eugene nodded, and seeing more guests approaching, he invited them all, "Please, come inside."

Seeing the crowd around Eugene thicken, Bluno had no choice but to lead his daughter inside.

"Lindsay, you better make your old man proud later and outshine that Mabel! What kind of name is Mabel, anyway? It doesn't hold a candle to Lindsay. Did you remember to take photos of your trophies before we left?"

Lindsay nodded, "I did."

"Good. You'll need to find a way to charm Mr. Albright. If you can become his protege, this trip will have been worth it!"

After all, they had the money; what they sought was prestige.

If his daughter could gain fame, she would have no trouble marrying into an even better family.

"But Dad, I want to be Jamie Noelle's protege. I love the violin."

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# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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"Sure thing, kiddo, you can learn from Eugene - ah, I mean, Mr. Albright - and study violin with Jamie Noelle at the same time. It won't have any conflict." Bruto patted her back, "I'm just waiting for you to steal the show."

"Don't worry, Dad. I'll make you proud," Lindsay was quite confident in her looks and talents.

Eugene had been standing so long his feet ached, and his smile was nearly frozen on his face. As guests continued to stream in, he grew impatient - Arabella was yet to arrive.

Was it possible those old coots were deliberately keeping her from coming, planning to stand him up collectively??

They wouldn't dare, would they??

With that thought, he pulled out his phone and sent a voice message to the group chat.

"Listen up, if you guys dare keep Bella from my birthday bash today, I'll have your heads tomorrow."

Beck. [Well, let's hear who's got that sour tone. Oh, it's today's man of the hour.

Why? Bella didn't show up and you're blaming us old folks?]

Charles. [Now, Mr. Eugene, aren't you a tad too anxious? It's only 7:15 p.m.; It's still early! Bella probably just left home after dinner.]

Tanner. [If she makes it in the last minute, you should count your blessings. That girl's busy, you know!]

Nelson. [What's the rush? I haven't even left my house yet. Could she be faster than me?]

Eugene glanced at the clock - it really was just 7:15 p.m., but why did it feel like an eternity had passed?

"I'll leave you folks to it; I need a break," Eugene said, his throat dry from all the schmoozing.

The butler spoke respectfully, "Mr. Albright, Ms. Collins..."

"Where? I don't see her." Eugene craned his neck looking around, "Where is she?" Indeed, there were luxury cars pulling up outside, but not Bella's. He looked everywhere but didn't see the familiar figure.

"I wasn't finished. What I meant was, when Ms. Collins arrives, I'll let you know. Please, go take a rest, have some tea."

Eugene barely suppressed the urge to punch him, "Can't you just speak in full sentences next time?"

He thought Arabella really arrived; turned out he got his hopes up for nothing!

As he noticed seven or eight guests disembark and head his way, Eugene quickly uttered, "I must be going."

"Mr. Albright!"

Just then, a voice called out.

Eugene looked up to see a young woman, arm in arm with Martin, walking towards him with a poised and friendly smile.

Martin was his invitee, that he knew, but who was this girl? She looked vaguely familiar. And why was she latched onto Martin's arm??

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"Happy birthday," Martin said with a smile that carried the humility and politeness of a younger generation.

As he finished speaking, he turned his gaze affectionately toward the girl beside him and introduced her with ease, "This is my girlfriend, Serena."

"You have a girlfriend?" Eugene's eyes shifted to Serena. The name seemed oddly familiar. Where had he heard it before?

"Mr. Albright, today marks another milestone in your life - an occasion that shines as brightly as the sun and the moon. I wish you happiness in all things. Here's a little something for you. It's not much, but I hope you'll accept it with my best wishes," Serena said, her smile radiant as she presented a gift box.

"You're too kind. Your presence is gift enough; you shouldn't have gone to the trouble of bringing anything."

Previously, Eugene had taken a spill while out for his morning jog. It was Martin who happened to see and took him to the hospital.

At the time, Eugene didn't know who the kind young man was, only that he was someone who did good deeds without expecting recognition. Later, when Eugene saw him on the news, he learned that Martin was a child of the well-respected Cooper family.

Afterwards, Eugene made a point of thanking Martin in person. They had stayed in contact since then.

Eugene found Martin to be genuine and kind-hearted - not like some rich kids who flaunted their wealth and squandered money carelessly.

For his birthday celebration, Eugene felt it was important to invite Martin. After all, who knew when the next birthday party would be, especially if it weren't for Martin's timely assistance back then, who knew

what lingering issues Eugene might have had.

"I can't accept this gift," Eugene demurred, considering that he still owed Martin a favor, how could he accept a gift?

But Martin insisted gently, "Mr. Albright, Serena has always admired you. This gift is a token of her respect. Please accept it."

"It's from both of us. You're one of the people we admire most," Serena added gracefully.

"Well, if you insist, I'd be remiss to refuse such generous intentions. You both are thoughtful. Please, go inside and relax for a bit. Once everyone's here, I'll invite you to join in blowing out the candles and having some cake."

"Thank you, Mr. Albright," Serena replied instantly, her smile sweetening.

Eugene simply nodded, "I have some things to tend to. Please excuse me for a moment."

"You go ahead. Martin and I will take a stroll around," Serena said, her smile unwavering as she linked arms with Martin.

Eugene had only walked a few steps away when it suddenly hit him - Serena Collins!!

Could it be Kenneth and Louisa's daughter without blood tie, the nominal sister Bella had -  
Serena?!

Ever since the family reunion, everyone she had mentioned except Serena.

He'd heard from Beck that this Serena was trouble. Could this girl be her?

If so, what a shame it would be for Martin, such a good kid!

Serena, still arm in arm with Martin, had just reached the garden when someone called out to her.

"Serena!!"

Turning around, Serena saw Lindsay looking at her with surprise and joy, exclaiming, "Is it really you?"

"Lindsay? Is that you?? When did you get back? Why didn't you come to see me!"

Serena exclaimed, hugging her friend tightly.

After embracing for a long moment, Lindsay said, "I've been back since last month. My parents decided to bring their business back home."

Her words trailed off as she looked at the young man behind Serena, asking with a hint of surprise,

"Serena, who's this?"

"Martin," Serena introduced him confidently, "my boyfriend."

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# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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"Are you two together?" Lindsay asked with a tinge of astonishment, clutching Serena's hand and whispering, "I thought you were engaged? Wasn't his name Romeo? How come it's Martin now?"

Romeo was a man who stood atop the social pyramid, a figure everyone looked up to, and yet Serena had chosen a nobody that no one had even heard of. What on earth was going on?

"It's a long story. Let me just introduce you, Martin and I have been dating for a few months now." Serena

turned to give Martin a tender look,

"Martin, this is Lindsay, my old middle school desk-mate. We got along

best in class and could talk for hours.

Then she moved abroad with her parents, and it's been ages since

we last saw each other. I didn't expect to bump into her today."

The two had only kept in touch via social media, liking each other's life updates and leaving the occasional comment.

It had been years since they'd actually met face to face.

"Pleasure to meet you," Martin said politely with a nod.

"Hello, hello, I'm Serena's good friend. Pleasure to meet you, too." Lindsay responded, then whispered to Serena, "Wow, your boyfriend is quite the gentleman. His vibe, his upbringing, they're not a bit less impressive than Romeo's."

Serena knew she was just being nice, but she graciously smiled and said, "I think so. He's nice to me."

As she said this, she gave Martin a sweet glance.

Martin's gaze softened even more, as if touched by her words.

"Lindsay, are you here for Mr. Albright's birthday bash too?" Serena took the opportunity to inquire.

Lindsay, without any guile, laid it all out, "Yeah, my dad wants me to learn chess from Mr. Albright. It sounds prestigious, you know? Originally, Mr. Albright invited my granddad, but he couldn't make it, so he passed the opportunity to my dad and me. What about you? Are you here with Mr. Collins?"

"I came with him," Serena gave Martin another affectionate look.

Lindsay appeared surprised, "Mr. Albright's invited him? That means your boyfriend must be quite something to catch his eye. That's so impressive!"

Just moments ago, she had thought of Martin as a non-entity, but now she looked at him with newfound respect.

Serena said with a smile, "Martin, Lindsay and I haven't caught up in a long time. We're going to chat for a bit."

"Of course," Martin nodded at her and tipped his head to Lindsay before excusing himself.

"Your boyfriend is so attentive and kind to you. What's the situation? Why aren't you with Romeo anymore? There's been no news about you two."

The Collins family and the McMillian family's engagement had been arranged long ago.

Serena's eyes fell slightly, "I'll tell you the truth, but you mustn't breathe a word of this to anyone."

Seeing Serena's hesitation, Lindsay nodded and whispered, "Don't worry. I can keep a secret."

"It's just that."

Before Serena could finish her story, they saw a girl enter through the main door. Even without makeup, her striking beauty was undeniable - her face was extraordinary, almost unfairly beautiful under the lighting.

Damn it!

She had actually come!!

The butler at the door couldn't hide his delight at the sight of Arabella.

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Chapter 1490

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# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

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His excitement was palpable as he said, “Ms. Arabella, you finally made it! Mr. Albright was waiting by the door, craning his neck to anticipate your arrival. Eventually, he got overwhelmed by all the guests cozying up to him and ducked out to his room. You just missed him by a whisker.”

“Let him have his moment of peace. We’ll call him out once all the other seniors have arrived,” Arabella replied, understanding that such events could be exhausting for the elderly. She figured it would do him some good to have a breather.

The butler noticed the rectangular box in Arabella's hands, about the size of two smartphones, and said with a smile, "Is that a birthday present for Mr. Albright? He'll be thrilled to see it!" Arabella was about to hand over the gift to the butler when he added, "Better you give it to him personally.

Nothing would make him happier than receiving it straight from your hands, Ms. Arabella."

Arabella nodded, "Alright, I'll do that in a bit."

She walked in with the gift.

Serena eyed her, biting her lip in frustration. Damn it, she thought, Arabella was dressed so simply, and

yet she managed to draw the attention of many the moment she entered the room.

"She's so pretty!" Lindsay couldn't help but exclaim, "Why is she here alone? How could Mr. Albright invite

such a young lady? What's her story?"

Despite Serena's meticulous effort to make herself look best, fragrant and polished from head to toe, she couldn't outshine Arabella's radiant beauty.

Her face was cool and noble, and those clear, piercing eyes were impossible to look away from.

"She's Romeo's latest girlfriend," Serena suddenly revealed.

"What?" Lindsay gasped, covering her mouth in disbelief, glancing between Arabella and Serena, stuttering in shock, "You mean?"

Serena nodded, confirming the unspoken.

Lindsay was utterly astounded, unable to believe that such an aloof-looking girl would be involved with someone else's fiancé.

Pure wickedness!

Other ladies started gossiping as they noticed Arabella.

“Who’s that girl? Why is she here alone?”

“And her outfit is so casual.”

Everyone at the birthday party was dressed to the nines, hoping to catch the eye of the influential attendees, having spent considerable time on their attire.

Some flaunted limited-edition jewelry, others had their eyebrows meticulously crafted.

But Arabella wore a simple, casual ensemble, effortlessly chic with her beauty and fair skin.

“Maybe she’s a servant’s daughter sneaking a peek at the high life?”

“But could a servant’s daughter have such poise?”

“Some of these maids get involved with the wealthy. It wouldn’t be surprising for them to have a daughter

with some finesse. I think she looks like one of those girls out to snag a rich kid.”

“Mr. Albright’s guests are all from the older generation. This girl isn’t accompanying any elder; she’s here on her own. Maybe I should go ask her!”

Roxanne approached first, her smile tinged with condescension, “Hi there, may I ask who you’re accompanying?”

Arabella didn’t recognize the woman before her, but considering this was Grandpa Eugene’s birthday bash, she wasn’t sure how this woman was connected to him. She replied in a cool tone, “I came by myself.”

Roxanne was visibly taken aback, “You didn’t come with a referral?”

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