

# The Princess and the Pauper (Arabella)

Chapter 1526

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Romeo glanced her way and then looked away just as quickly.

Roxanne, struck by a sudden thought, blurted out, "Something nobody's ever tried before."

Without pausing for a second, Romeo strode past her, leaving behind a crisp, invigorating scent.

She couldn't help but inhale deeply, savoring the aroma. Was this the allure of a mature man?

She liked it a lot.

Through the thick crowd, Romeo spotted the young girl surrounded by a group of old men, all smiles and laughter. Just as he considered approaching, another figure stepped in his path.

"Are you one of Mr. Eugene's guests too? I see everyone's eager to chat you up. It must be so

bothersome, right?" Madeline feigned ignorance about Romeo's identity, putting on a quirky face. "I could pretend to be your girlfriend to fend off some of those admirers for you."

Romeo gave her a cold glance. Was she Daydreaming??

Did he look like someone who needed a fake girlfriend??

Mabel knew that to deal with a man like him, beating around the bush wouldn't work. She declared her feelings openly in front of everyone.

"Hello Romeo, my name is Mabel. I've liked you for three years."

The guests were taken aback. How bold was the girl to confess her feelings in front of so many people.

"Three years ago, you attended a business event of your group, and it was covered by CTV. I saw you on TV, working so diligently, and I just fell for you. Tonight, Serena brought her new boyfriend here, so I'm guessing you two must have split. You're always so busy, I don't know if I'd ever get the chance to care for you, to be there for you, even if not as a girlfriend. You could date several girls at once, I don't mind. I'm

confident that one day I'll catch your eyes."

After pouring her heart out, Mabel waited eagerly and nervously for the response of the man in front of her.

To call him a man might be inaccurate, as Romeo was actually only in his twenties. But to call him a young guy seemed off too, given his sharp, mature features.

"I've already got someone I like," Romeo said, brushing past them and heading straight to Arabella.

"When did you get here?"

"Just after seven."

"Alright, let's give the young couple some space, shall we? Let's go inside for a couple of more drinks."

Eugene signaled the old gentlemen to move away, leaving room for the young pair.

Arabella looked at Romeo with interest.

"Quite popular, aren't you?"

Romeo flashed a charming smile. "There are not so many dudes here tonight. If there are more, it might take me weeks to reach you."

Arabella couldn't help but laugh. "Stop it."

"I heard you made tonight's cake?"

With that, Arabella handed him a slice of cake. "How did you know? Want a taste?"

"Grandpa was bragging about it just now; he said your cake made him happier than winning the lottery. I

was dealing with some work at the time, but all I could think about was your cake."

Romeo took a bite with his fork.

"How is it?"

"Yummy. Will you make one for my birthday too?" He scooped up another bite and brought it to her lips.

The cream touched her lips, sending an involuntary thrill through him, an irresistible temptation.

Watching her lips, Romeo suddenly had an urge to kiss them.

Arabella saw the cake right at her lips, too close to refuse. She took a bite and said playfully, "Is that too much?"

It was all too deliberate.

Was he just trying to show everyone that he was no longer available?

"Not at all, I am already low-key for not making a public announcement with fanfare." Romeo said, offering her another bite with a smile.

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"I'm stuffed," Arabella admitted, having polished off a substantial meal.

"Could you make me one?" he asked.

He longed for a cake like that, one that was his and his alone.

"When your birthday comes, tell me what style you want in advance."

Was that a yes??

"Really? I can choose the style?"

Romeo's smile softened his entire demeanor, his gaze tender and

unyielding as it remained fixed on Arabella.

Whispers rippled through the crowd.

"Is Romeo dating Jamie Noelle? They're looking well matched, like a couple!"

"Weren't there rumors about the Collins and the McMillian families having a marriage arrangement? Isn't Serena supposed to be Romeo's fiancée? Yet here she is with Martin tonight, and Romeo's feeding Jamie Noelle cake. What's going on?"

"Could it be that they've had a spat and are trying to make each other jealous with this public display?"

"But Romeo seems genuinely into Jamie Noelle. Could all this be an act?"

"If Romeo really gets together with Jamie Noelle, I'll just die."

After all, Jamie Noelle was such a powerhouse, someone she could never surpass in a lifetime.



And let's not forget her looks—that icy charm of hers really made her stand out in a crowd.

"That girl's not only Jamie Noelle, she's also Queena. If she ends up being Romeo's girlfriend, her life's just too perfect."

"I can't accept this."

"Me neither."

After finishing his cake, Romeo wrapped an arm around Arabella's slender waist.

"Mr. Eugene's house is quite quaint."

"He loves to garden," Arabella shared.

"That plum tree was planted by me. Never thought it'd grown so big."

Romeo felt a twinge of envy for Mr. Eugene, to have a young lady planting flowers for him.

Romeo tenderly tucked a stray hair behind her ear, softly saying, "You're like the plum blossom, never vying for attention, yet your beauty is unmistakable."

Just then, Mabel's grandmother approached Romeo with a warm smile. Considering her authority as an elder she expected some deference from the young man.

"Romeo, dear, remember me? My late husband used to play chess with your grandfather." Amanda asked with a twinkle in her eye. "Are you and Jamie Noelle dating?"

Jamie Noelle??

Romeo's gaze shifted back to Arabella. She was Jamie Noelle? That was a surprise.

At first it was Maestro Melody, now it was Jamie Noelle.

How many more secrets did she have?

Behind Amanda, the guests were all eyes on Romeo, waiting for a denial.

Since Arabella's identity had not been disclosed, Romeo didn't mean to mention it beforehand. Instead, he

pulled her close, looked at her with affection, and announced, "She's the one I've chosen for life."

He didn't specify girlfriend or fiancée.

But the message was clear, leaving everyone in attendance utterly astonished.

She's the one Romeo has chosen?

Romeo loved her, loved her enough to admit it openly??

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Serena had just returned from the restroom when she caught sight of Romeo, his arm wrapped snugly around Arabella's slender waist, boldly announcing to everyone, "She's the one for me, the love of my life."

Serena stood rooted to the spot and felt like being struck by lightning. It was unbelievable to her that a man like Romeo would make such a public declaration.

"Congratulations, Mr. McMillian, on finding your soulmate," many guests came forward with their wellwishes.

"I heard a rumor that Mr. McMillian was engaged to a Miss Collins. I thought it was true, but it seems it was just a gossip."

"How did Mr. McMillian and Jamie Noelle meet? We're all so curious."

"It must have been Mr. McMillian who pursued Miss Noelle, right?"

"Wasn't it Miss Noelle who butted into someone else's relationship first?"

That last comment froze the atmosphere instantly.

Everyone turned their eyes to the person who gave the comment in the crowd. It was Madeline. She probably hadn't expected her muttered words to attract so much attention.

A path was cleared, leaving Madeline exposed under Romeo and Arabella's scrutinizing gaze.

"What do you mean by that?" Arabella asked, cutting straight to the chase.

Romeo's gaze also settled on Madeline.

"Making things up out of thin air?"

Madeline, who had never been one to handle such confrontations, especially not against such a

glamorous couple, faltered, "Isn't it true?"

Her voice had noticeably diminished.

The guests around murmured among themselves.

"Could the McMillian-Collins engagement rumor be true, and did Romeo and

Serena really split because

Jamie Noelle got involved?"

"No way, Jamie Noelle always seemed so aloof and dignified. She wouldn't do something like that."

"But Madeline doesn't look like the type to spread rumors either."

"Who told you that?" Arabella had her suspicions.

Madeline, under immense pressure, countered, "Is it true?"

"Would you believe me if I said it wasn't?"

Madeline was indeed skeptical.

"So, did Serena tell you?" Arabella speculated.

Serena's heart sank upon hearing her name. Who was this Madeline to drag her into this mess?

"Or was it Lindsay?" Arabella seemed to have pieced it together.

All eyes shifted to Lindsay, who was attempting to sneak away but found herself unable to speak or move under everyone's gaze.

Damn it. What was Madeline playing at, drawing the fire onto her, especially with Romeo right there?

"Smearing the person I care for comes with a price," Romeo's chilling gaze fell on Lindsay. "You have three seconds to come clean."

"Mr. McMillian." Lindsay hadn't expected the blame to fall on her.

"One." Romeo's patience had run out, his voice sending shivers down one's spine.

"Mr. McMillian, please, let me explain."

Before Lindsay could finish, Romeo interrupted with a stern, "Two."

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His tone was unyielding and merciless. Everyone knew that Romeo was a man with a vicious streak. When he said he would make someone pay, it wasn't just idle talk.

Bruno, standing nearby, hurried forward, "Mr. McMillian, there must be some misunderstandings. Sweetie, what do you know? Speak up. What's going on here? Please, take some champagne to soothe your throat while I talk to her. The kid's surely been led astray."

Overhearing this, Serena, who stood not far away, urgently said to Martin by her side, "We need to leave,

now."

"No way, you've been humiliated, and I can't just stand by and watch. Who made you fall over? And what about those wine stains on your dress?"

"Let's go home and talk about it." Serena was running out of time, fearing that any second, Lindsay would spill the beans, and she wouldn't be able to leave at all.

"How can I just swallow this insult?"

Martin fumed. As long as he thought of how Serena was covered in cake and wine, sprawling on the floor in utter disarray, he would be so furious that he wished to tear the perpetrator to pieces.

"Are you deaf?" Serena tugged at him, "I'm tired, I want to go home and rest. Are you coming or not?"

"Why hide from them?" Martin glanced over at Romeo, then back at her, "Was it them? Was it Romeo? Or your sister? I'll clear this up with them."

"Martin!"

Before Serena could set things straight with him, Bruno was already berating his daughter in a low, angry voice, "Do you want to ruin us? Can't you see Mr. McMillian is waiting? Speak up, or the Marsh family is finished!"

Lindsay, knowing the extent of Romeo's power and ruthlessness, finally caved in and told the whole story.

"It was Serena, she told me this herself. We were close friends. She said she and Mr. McMillian were truly in love, but Jamie Noelle interfered and stole his love."

The guests were stunned by the revelation.

So it was true.

The engagement between the Collins and the McMillian families was real, and Jamie Noelle had indeed meddled with their relationship.

What a juicy piece of gossip in the world of the wealthy families.

On one side was the pretty but vain heiress, and on the other, a talented and beautiful artist. No wonder Romeo would choose the latter.

Though that's what people thought, no one dared to speak their mind or show any disrespect to Romeo.

They all just stood by to watch the drama unfolding silently.

Romeo smirked coldly. Again, Serena.

Arabella was left speechless. Serena, always up to her tricks, never failed fooling one person after another. When would it come to an end?

"Bring Serena to me," Arabella instructed a servant.

The servant, having worked for the Eugene family for years, obeyed Arabella as if she were Eugene's own granddaughter.

Seeing the servant approach, Serena angrily shook off Martin's hand, "If you won't leave, I will!"

Then she tried to to escape the scene at a run.

However, She was stopped as the servant instructed via earpiece all the other servants to block her path.

Soon enough, Serena was brought to Arabella.

"Did you tell Lindsay that you and Romeo were in love? That I was the one who came between you?"

Arabella asked with a hint of amusement, facing the liar before her.

In front of Romeo, Serena dared not lie, but with all the guests watching, she didn't want to be humiliated either.

Getting a brainstorm all of a sudden, she slapped Lindsay across the face.

Lindsay was stunned. What was happening??

Even Lindsay's father, Bruno, was confused, "What's wrong with you? You think just because you're the Collins heiress you can do whatever you like? Lindsay is my precious girl, it's not your place to slap her."

"Lindsay, I can't believe you'd go this far!" Serena lashed out in feigned anger.

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Lindsay felt like she was caught in a tornado of confusion and disbelief.

"I just pretended to be a disciple of Queena to fool you, and because of that, you doubt our friendship? So that's why you wanted revenge and spread wild rumors and lies about me out there? How could you?!"

Lindsay was at a loss for words.

"I'm so disappointed in you," Serena said, her tone dripping with disillusionment.

She then turned to

Romeo and the other guests, "I'm so sorry, everyone. This evening's mess is on me. I apologize for causing such a scene. I know my presence will only spoil the mood, and I'm sure none of you want me here. I'll take my leave now. Enjoy the rest of your night."

"Hold on a second." Lindsay finally pieced together what was happening. It hit her like a lightning bolt—

Serena had claimed to be Queena's disciple, and now, she was pinning the blame on her for the lies about Jamie Noelle intervening in her romance. It had been Serena who tearfully told her the story. How come it suddenly become a sheer fabrication?

Could it be that Jamie Noelle never interfered, and Serena was lying again?



Realizing this possibility, Lindsay was about to explode with anger when Serena shouted, "I must have been blind to befriend someone like you. We're done!"

Lindsay was dumbstruck.

Fuming, Serena pushed through the crowd and intended on leaving, when Romeo said, "Who said you could go?"

Serena almost called him "brother-in-law" but stopped herself, fearing that the guests would question her relationship with Romeo, and even more, that her faux heiress identity would be betrayed. She feigned innocence, "I honestly had no idea she would make up such nonsense behind my back."

Lindsay was livid, "Who's making things up? You're the one who told me Jamie Noelle ruined your love

life.

"I've hardly ever met Serena in my life, let alone had any kind of relationship,"

Romeo clarified in front of

everyone, "My heart belongs only to the lady by my side."

With that, he reached for Arabella's hand in a gesture that seemed to touch everyone there.

The guests were moved by his action, and many were utterly shocked.

Hadn't Romeo and Serena grown up together? How come they met each other so rarely?

It seemed like they had no connection at all.

Yet Serena had often posted on Facebook about visiting the McMillian estate, playing chess with Phillip. It looked like she had become a beloved figure in the McMillian family.

What was the truth?

It appeared that Serena was just blowing her own trumpet and Romeo had never really cared about her.

Lindsay finally got it—Romeo and Serena had never been involved. They were practically strangers, and everything was a fabrication by Serena.

"You liar!"

Before Lindsay could finish, Romeo said, "All three of you owe her an apology."

He was referring to Arabella. After all, the rumors had been spread by them.

Serena was the first to apologize, "I'm sorry, it's all my fault. I won't do it again."

Her apology came so quickly that it seemed almost comical.

Madeline hadn't expected things to turn out this way. She was unclear whether it was Lindsay or Serena who was lying, but now being scared, she said, "I'm sorry, it was my mistake for speaking without knowing

the whole truth. I won't be so reckless again."

Although angry, Lindsay knew she had to apologize to Arabella, "I'm sorry, it was my fault for listening to a deceiver."

At that moment, a servant came hurrying over, "Mr. McMillian, Ms. Bella, Mr. Eugene would like to have a word with you."

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