

Arabella 1881

Chapter 1881

The captain of the security detail motioned for his men to step forward and scan the newcomers for any dangerous items, but not a single one dared to move an inch.

After all, standing before them was the infamous Sheen – the man whose reputation preceded him!

Who would have the gall to frisk him?

Arabella could tell that this crew was intimidated by Sean. Horace had mentioned before that in this land, Sean was a force to be reckoned with—a big shot whose nod was essential for anything to happen in both the legit and underground scenes.

It seemed the rumors were true.

"Are we doing this or what?" Sean's tone was laced with impatience as he took a step forward, causing the dozen security guards to collectively step back in fear.

Sean was speechless.

He was just following his sister's advice to let them do their check, but these people were a bunch of cowards.

Though the security captain didn't step back, he too held a deep respect for Sean, knowing full well not

to cross a man so influential that even their employer's kin wouldn't dare offend him.

"Mr. Sheen, I had no idea you'd be delivering the clothes yourself, but we have our protocols here."

"So, you gonna scan me or what?" Sean snapped, "Or should I do it myself?"

The captain quickly bowed and said, "My apologies," before whipping out a scanner and running it over

Sean with the speed of light.

"Damn, from that distance? If you're gonna scan, do it right! What kind of half-assed check is that?"

The captain's mental defenses were faltering under Sean's demanding presence – truly as formidable

as the rumors suggested.

But he couldn't bring himself to get too close to the man.

Although he moved his scanner a bit closer, he leaned backward, symbolically running it over Sean a

few more times.

"Are we done here?"

"Ye-yes, that'll do."

As he moved to scan Sean's sister, Sean barked, "Keep away from my sister!"

The designer's his sister? Really?

Should he scan her, then?

"It's okay, go ahead," Arabella reassured, and the captain quickly scanned her, then moved on to the drivers behind her.

These drivers hardly seemed like your average chauffeurs – they all had a certain air about them that screamed 'do not mess with'.

Sean was probably just escorting his sister today, but who knew if he had other business?

"Can we go in now?" Sean had always despised their tedious procedures. In the past, when he visited other members, he'd just stride in with no checks, but being scanned like this was a first for him.

"This way, please," the chief indicated for them to take a side door on the left.

"My sister has to use the side door?"

"Except for the castle's owner, all personnel must use the side door."

Sean looked rather exasperated – he'd always used the main entrance when visiting other members.

"Mr. Sheen, I didn't expect you to come today. If you could just wait, I'll check if we can make an exception for you."

"No need, the side door is fine."

Arabella's words allowed the captain to breathe a sigh of relief, "Right this way, please."

Chapter 1882

Through a side gate and a series of security checkpoints and recognition portals, they truly entered the castle grounds.

The six truck drivers who had unloaded the cargo didn't have the clearance to proceed further. The castle staff took over, hefting the enormous crates inside. Once in the exhibition hall, they carefully unpacked the boxes, unveiling the pristine garments to be displayed and later scrutinized by the castle's proprietor.

Arabella and Sean, guided by two female bodyguards, traversed the frost-kissed garden to a charming drawing room where they were to wait.

Soon, the six outfits Arabella had designed were also delivered there.

The drawing room was as grand as the one where Leia had received her last time, but Arabella's state of mind was entirely different on this occasion.

At the moment, she was meticulously arranging her designs.

A servant brought in coffee and pastries, and Sean, without hesitation, took a seat. "Bella, let's take a breather here."

Arabella continued her work, prompting Sean to bring the refreshments to her. "Have some coffee first, it smells pretty good."

"I'll have some later, just keep it away from the clothes, will you?" she said, focused on her task.

"How about some pastries then?"

"I'm not hungry."

When Leia arrived, she found Sean holding a plate in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other, coaxing Arabella to eat.

A shadow of melancholy and surprise crossed Leia's eyes. Why was Sean here? And what was his relationship with Arabella?

"Bella."

Leia, dressed in a tasteful and elegant outfit, approached with grace and poise, her every move refined.

Eight nimble female bodyguards followed her closely.

As Arabella was about to curtsy, Leia spoke, "We're friends, remember? From now on, you call me

Leia, and I'll call you Bella. No need for formalities here."

"Leia," Arabella responded with a radiant smile. "This is my dear brother, Sean. There's been some trouble at home recently, and he didn't feel comfortable with me traveling alone, so he accompanied me here."

"Trouble at home?" Leia's eyes filled with concern and worry. Despite the urgency she felt, her upbringing ensured she always spoke in a calm, measured tone. "Do you need any help?"

"No, thank you."

"I hadn't realized that the renowned Sheen was your brother Sean." Leia was slightly taken aback, recalling how Sean insisted on feeding Arabella, and it dawned on her that it stemmed from a brother's care for his sister.

Such a strong bond between siblings.

Leia's gaze shifted to Sean. "Hello, Sean. We've met before, but I am still very pleased to see you again."

Sean was surprised. "Have we met before?"

He had no recollection of such an encounter.

"At a family banquet and a few dinner parties hosted by my brothers, I saw you from a distance several times."

Once, Sean had boldly voiced objections to her family members, challenged one of her arrogant brothers, and had even flipped a table in anger.

At that time, Leia had quietly harbored a deep admiration for him.

It was just that Sean never knew of her existence, nor had he any memory of her.

Chapter 1883

"Oh, dinner parties, family gatherings." Sean recalled, each memory a bitter pill to swallow, the kind that made you want to flip the table in frustration.

"Get some fresh coffee and pastries in here, don't neglect my friend and her brother," Leia said to the servants, her eyes softening as she glanced at Sean.

Suddenly, Arabella remembered something Leia had mentioned before: she had a crush on someone with the last name Collins.

Could it be Sean Collins?

"No need. Just check the clothes, and if all's good, I'm taking my sister home." Sean clearly didn't want to stick around.

A shadow of disappointment crossed Leia's heart as she heard him talking about leaving, but she managed to say gracefully, "Alright, please give me a moment."

She approached the garment Arabella had designed, "I didn't expect the final piece to be this stunning."

Her every gesture was just right, like a gentle breeze in spring.

To her, Arabella's design seemed to transform into a work of art, her gaze filled with admiration as she gently touched the fabric.

It was evident that Arabella had poured her heart not only into the design but also into sourcing the quality materials.

"Not bad, you truly are a genius designer. I made the right choice coming to you," Leia said, turning back to Arabella with a radiant smile.

Her beauty was renowned in this land, captured just once by the press, and it had been the talk of the town for years. Her features, as if sculpted by the divine hand, her skin pale and soft, resembled a

porcelain doll.

"Princess Leia, if you are pleased, then we won't impose any longer. C'mon Bella, let's head home,"

Sean said, eager to leave.

"Please wait," Leia said softly, "If you aren't in a hurry, I wonder if it might be possible for you to stay for coffee? Just the three of us, a little afternoon delight?"

Sean was about to respond when his phone rang. He excused himself, "Sorry, I have to take this call."

Leia nodded, her eyes full of understanding.

Whatever the person on the phone said, it made Sean lose his cool.

"I asked for a sapphire, what on earth did you send me? What is this dull stone? You think this is

worthy of gracing Ophelia's neck? Are you out of your mind? Find the right one!" Sean ended the call

with a hint of fury.

Leia, overhearing his conversation, was momentarily taken aback but soon realized he was searching

for a precious sapphire for someone named Ophelia. Did he have a girlfriend?

"Sean, what kind of sapphire are you looking for? I know quite a few jewelers who could have what you

need," she offered.

Immediately, Sean showed her a photo on his phone, "Like this one?"

Leia saw that the sapphire in the picture was especially rare, even rarer than any she owned.

"I'm not sure, but I can give you their contacts. Is this for your girlfriend?" Leia asked with a hint of curiosity.

"Yeah," Sean replied nonchalantly.

Arabella could almost hear Leia's heart breaking, but her impeccable upbringing wouldn't let her show a hint of her inner turmoil.

With a smile, Leia said, "Alright, someone get Sean the contact details for all the jewelers. Tell them he's a friend of mine and to treat him well."

One of the female bodyguards, knowing of her mistress's affection for Sean, hesitated but complied when Leia urged gently, "Well? Hurry up."

Reluctantly, the bodyguard handed over the contacts to Sean, feeling a pang of unwillingness and sympathy for the Princess.

After all, Leia had harbored feelings for Sean for a long time.

And she didn't expect that Sean had already found someone else so quickly.

Chapter 1884

"Thanks." Sean punched the contacts into his phone with practiced ease before looking up. "Guess we'll skip the afternoon coffee. Arabella and I have some errands to run. Let's head out."

As much as Leia didn't want to see Sean leave, she didn't press the issue, her smile gracious and understanding. "Well, we can always have tea some other time. Let me walk you out."

"No need," Sean and Arabella both chimed in unison.

"You stay and try on the rest of the outfits. Once the other styles are ready, I'll drop them off." Arabella knew Leia came from an influential family and wasn't supposed to escort them out of the mansion. She had already bent the rules last time; Arabella didn't want to put her in an awkward position again.

"When are you coming next? Just give me a shout, and I'll drive you over," Sean said casually, but his words warmed Leia's heart, the thought of Sean returning was like a blossoming flower in her mind.

"Then I won't hold you up any longer. Safe travels," Leia said as they parted.

"Thanks for the snacks and coffee," Sean said, setting down his mug and tugging at his sister's sleeve to leave the sitting room.

Leia watched their retreating figures, lost in thought.

Her bodyguard whispered, "I never guessed he was Miss Arabella's real brother. They're so different."

"Really?" Leia's smile was as captivating as ever, her gaze still following them. "I think they're quite similar. They might seem all cool and distant, but deep down, they're warm-hearted."

Truth be told, she envied Arabella for having such a caring brother. Leia's eyes dimmed briefly with her own thoughts before brightening again.

Once they left the mansion, Sean drove his sports car with Arabella to check out the resort he owned.

The resort was expansive, a hit with the elite from the day it opened. Its convenient location, surrounded by natural beauty, boasted ten top-tier golf courses, up-close wildlife encounters, falconry, off-road racing, horseback riding, stargazing, and more.

The resort manager personally took them on a tour in a golf cart. When they stopped, Sean stepped out and said to his sister, "From now on, this place is yours."

He held out his hand, and the manager presented the contract with a pen at the ready.

Sean penned his name on the deed with a flourish and handed it to Arabella.

"Miss Arabella, from now on, just let me know what you need," the manager said, bowing with a

respectful grin.

Arabella was puzzled. Why was Sean suddenly gifting her such a grand resort? There were the bank card and the collectibles before.

"I've been wanting to give this to you for a while. I thought bring you by when I had the chance, and today seemed perfect. Why wait for the right day when today's just as good?" Sean grinned. "You'll have to take care of it now, Bella."

Arabella knew with the resort in her name, she'd have to swing by now and then. Sean was just finding ways to see her more often, and with a place like this, the monthly profits had to be substantial. He was clearly finding ways to boost her income.

"This resort is part of a chain. There are twenty-four of them in Belloria, all in your name now," the manager revealed, taking Arabella by surprise.

Twenty-four? That many?

"This is one of the most profitable ventures under my name."

It was a well-oiled machine, no need for her to fuss over it. This was Sean's way of giving her a

financial leg up while also finding more excuses to meet up.

"Thanks, Sean," Arabella said, taking the contract with a grateful smile.

Sean ruffled her hair affectionately. "Silly girl, no need for formalities with your own brother."

Chapter 1885

"Mr. Sheen, Mr. Flair caught a glimpse of you earlier and wanted to have a word. Is this a good time?"

the hotel manager asked with a respectful bow.

"I'll step out for a moment," Sean said, ruffling Arabella's hair. "Hang tight for me, will you? I've had my

guys bring the jet over, and we'll head straight to Reflections Villa from here."

"Sure thing."

He turned back to the manager, "Show my sister around, will you? Let her get a feel for the place."

"Absolutely."

The hotel manager bowed deeply as Sean departed, waiting until he was a good distance away in the

golf cart before straightening up. "Ms. Bella, shall I take you on a little tour?"

"No need. I'll just wait here for Sean," Arabella replied, tired and preferring to sit and rest awhile.

"But Mr. Sheen asked me to."

"Do you listen to him?"

The manager was taken aback, then quickly bowed again, "Of course, your wishes come first, Ms.

Bella."

After the manager had respectfully retreated, Arabella settled onto a nearby bench. Not far behind her was a chain-link fence, beyond which lay an off-road racing track.

She pulled out her phone and saw several messages and two missed calls from Romeo.

Arabella shot back a video call.

"I just finished dropping off clothes for Leia, and then I got this massive gift from Sean. Take a look around, recognize the place?"

Romeo caught sight of the off-road track and the vast open space, with well-kept lawns and the ocean view.

"Did Sean gift you his resort hotel?"

"You noticed?" Arabella was impressed by his quick recognition, just from a glance in the video, he knew where she was.

"With a track like that, it could only be Sean's resort," Romeo said, watching a gentle breeze play with

her hair, a loose strand fluttering softly, "I've missed you. It's been two whole days."

Even though he knew she was busy, those days felt like an eternity.

"Aren't you seeing me now?" Arabella knew he missed her, so she had initiated the video call on purpose, "Once Sean's done with his meeting, we'll head back. Tomorrow's New Year, we'll see each other then, right?"

"So long."

A stark contrast to his cool public persona, his whiny tone now made Arabella chuckle lightly.

Just then, a figure approached Arabella, seemingly quite taken with her, "Hey there, mind if I join you?"

"Who's that?" Romeo's voice had an edge, tinged with annoyance and jealousy.

But Arabella's phone wasn't loud enough for the stranger to hear.

Without ending the video call, Arabella ignored the newcomer, speaking to Romeo on screen, "Finish up early today and don't spend all day in the office just because I'm not there."

"I was hoping we could be friends. Are you staying here alone? What room are you in? If you're unattached, I'm up for some fun and can keep you company."

The guy seemed like a typical young, rich kid trying to impress Arabella, lifting his chin and mentioning,

"I know the people who run this place, I'm a friend of the owner."

A friend of Sean's?

"And your point is?" Arabella's gaze finally shifted to him, still not ending the video chat.

Chapter 1886

"Alright then, I'll just cut to the chase. You're stunning, you know? I caught a glimpse of you from afar,

and I couldn't tear my eyes away. I'd like to get to know you, be friends."

The stranger paused and glanced at Arabella's phone, "Are you FaceTiming your boyfriend? It's

vacation time back home and he's still working. Must be some tough gig. If you're willing to take the

time to get to know me, maybe even date me, I could offer your boyfriend a job at my company."

"You want my fiancé to work for you?" Arabella's lips curled into a half-smile, "Can you afford him?"

Fiancé?

Afford him?

The man chuckled, "Let me introduce myself."

Raising his voice so the man on the other end of the call could hear, he said, "My name's Joshua Flair,

ever heard of the Flair Group? We've got forty-two branches across six countries. I'm the only son. I'll

inherit it all one day. Not just one fiancé of yours, but a hundred, a thousand—I could hire them all. But it all depends on whether his skills and talent are worth the salary I'd offer. Of course, for your sake, I wouldn't mind being a little generous, consider it a favor."

Arabella smiled, turning to the person in the video, "Hear that? Someone's trying to poach you, wants you to work for him."

"I'd like to see who this guy is."

Arabella flipped the phone screen around, and Joshua was stunned to see the face of Romeo on the other end!

His mind reeled.

Had he seen wrong?

How could this guy look so much like Romeo?

How could this girl possibly know someone like Romeo, a high-flier in the stratosphere of society?

She had just said Romeo was her fiancé?

Joshua was dumbstruck.

"Mr. McMillian, there are two urgent documents that require your signature." Carl knocked and entered,

placing the files in front of Romeo.

Mr. McMillian??

Really Romeo?

Joshua's knees began to tremble.

Arabella's lips curled up, "I wonder how much the Flair Group would be willing to pay for the skills and talents of my fiancé."

"Joshua?" Romeo's voice was mocking and disdainful, as if he were looking down on an insignificant ant.

"No, no, we can't afford. Sir, Mr. McMillian, I had no idea it was you. I apologize for the offense! I've intruded!" Joshua immediately bowed in apology, then turned to Arabella, bowing with each word he spoke, "I'm sorry for my blindness and presumption. Excuse me, I'm so sorry."

As he turned to leave, Arabella drawled, "Did my fiancé say you could go?"

"I must say, you've got good taste." Romeo's teasing voice made Joshua's legs shake even more

violently.

In terms of looks, height, presence, he couldn't hold a candle to Romeo.

As for wealth, he didn't even come close to a fraction of what Romeo had.

Yet there he was, flirting with Romeo's fiancée right in front of him.

"Mr. McMillian, it's all my fault, please give me a chance to make amends." Joshua continued his

apologies.

"What's going on?" Sean, from a distance, quickened his pace toward them.

"Sean." Arabella rose from her lounge chair, her smile serene, "Is this your friend?"

Sean glanced at Joshua, "What's up, has he been bothering you?"

Chapter 1887

Joshua was simply a client's son, someone whom Sean barely knew. But at this moment, Sean was far

more concerned about what his sister had been through.

Hubery Flair, who had come with Sean, quickly shot his son Joshua a glare upon hearing the trouble

he'd caused, then turned to Arabella with a sheepish, ingratiating smile. "Ah, so you're the sister Sean

just mentioned, Ms. Bella? A pleasure to meet you. Whatever my boy did wrong, please, feel free to tell

me, and I'll make sure he learns his lesson."

"Mr. Flair," a voice from the video call chimed in.

Hubery's eyes snapped to the screen, and there was Romeo!

He quickly bent forward, all smiles, "Mr. McMillian, are you video chatting with Ms. Bella? May I inquire how you two are acquainted?"

"I was having a lovely chat with my fiancée, and then your son here suggests she should follow him, and even tells me to come work at the Flair Group."

"What the heck?" Sean bristled with anger.

But before Sean could take any action, Hubery, livid beyond words, slapped his son across the face.

"You good-for-nothing! I brought you here to learn from Sean, who at such a young age has built an impressive empire, and instead, you hit on his sister, Mr. McMillian's fiancée." Hubery, still fuming, slapped Joshua again.

"Dad, I didn't realize she was—"

"Shut your mouth! Apologize now!" Hubery was fuming. His son had always been a disappointment, and now he was an embarrassment.

Joshua could do nothing but apologize profusely.

"Ms. Bella, Mr. McMillian, Mr. Sean, I'm truly sorry. I obviously haven't taught him well enough."

As Hubery continued to bow and scrape, Sean cut in with a cold voice, "Save your apologies. The deal we discussed is off. This hotel, I've already gifted it to my sister, so you need not come here anymore."

With that, Sean took his sister by the arm and walked away.

"Mr. Sean, Ms. Bella." Hubery, in a fit of exasperation, kicked his son and hurried after the touring cart.

The hotel manager was driving ahead, with Sean and Arabella seated at the back, while Hubery, gasping for air, chased after their cart, and a limping Joshua trailed behind.

"Mr. Sean, Ms. Bella, please give the Flair family another chance." Hubery was nearly out of breath.

"Get them out of here," Sean said, obviously annoyed.

Dare to flirt with his sister?

A couple of slaps were the least of what was deserved.

Soon enough, a bunch of security guards rushed over and hauled the Flairs away.

The onlookers were having a field day.

"Can't believe that Joshua had the nerve to make a move on Mr. Sean's sister."

"So, what kind of sister is she? A cousin? She is quite pretty."

"It's my first time seeing her."

"I've never seen Mr. Sean bring his sister here before. I heard that from now on, she'll be managing this hotel."

"She's landed herself quite the deal. I wonder why Sean is so good to her?"

"Hold up, stop the cart!" Sean suddenly thought of something important and urgently asked his sister,

"He didn't touch you, did he?"

Arabella smiled slyly, "Nope."

Relieved, Sean thought to himself that if Joshua had, he would make sure the guy would never use his hands again. How dared him!

Chapter 1888

On the other side of town, at the grand For-ena Villa.

Serena's eyelids fluttered open, and the maid, Dora, immediately exclaimed with joy, "Serena, you're awake? I'll go inform the master right away!"

Serena's vision wavered between blurry and clear.

An intricately carved ceiling, an opulent crystal chandelier, and ornate, luxurious draperies.

She found herself in a bedroom that exuded luxury and grandeur.

But how did she end up here? Where was this place?

"Serena, are you feeling better now?" asked a face that appeared before her, youthful and delicate.

"My name is Dora. Mr. Cooper asked me to take care of you," she explained, perhaps sensing

Serena's confusion about who 'the master' was. She added with emphasis, "It's Mr. Cooper, Martin

Cooper."

Martin Cooper?.

A torrent of memories flooded Serena's mind.

Louisa had beaten her mercilessly, left her in the basement for three whole days without a glance, and

Sean ordered someone to douse her with icy water and slap her across the face.

When she was tortured to the brink of her last breath, the servants, following her parents' orders, left

her to fend for herself. She wasn't given a morsel of food or a sip of water, and her wounds were left

untreated.

To survive, she had to crawl to a corner and force herself to drink the scant, dirty water left in a plastic

basin.

At the thought, she closed her eyes. Her heart twisted in agony, and she felt a suffocating pain.

"Serena, are you alright? Why did you pass out again?" Dora asked, concerned. "June, quickly call the doctor."

But Serena hadn't passed out.

The painful memories made her heart ache unbearably, causing her body to tremble slightly.

After the doctor arrived, Dora quickly said, "Serena just woke up for a moment and then passed out again. She's trembling all over. I don't know if it's because she's too cold."

The doctor examined Serena, checked the medical equipment readings, and then leaned over, calling out softly, "Serena, can you hear me speaking now?"

Serena felt numb, like a walking shell of herself.

"Serena? Serena?" The doctor noticed that the medical monitors showed normal readings, except one indicated intense emotional fluctuations.

She must have been agitated by some memory upon waking up.

If her emotions continued like this, it could trigger a series of adverse reactions.

"Serena?" the doctor called again with patience.

Hearing the news, Martin rushed in, "Serena's awake?"

He had just been in the study, handling some work-related phone calls. To think that in such a short time, the servant had told him that Serena was awake.

"She passed out again." Dora said, "She was only awake for less than a minute."

Martin took a seat beside the bed, looking at the woman lying there. Even though her eyes were closed, there were traces of tears at the corners.

"Serena?" Martin called out anxiously yet tenderly, "It's me, Martin. Are you awake? Did you have a nightmare? Don't be afraid, I'm here now."

Chapter 1889

Serena could no longer hold back the torrent of emotions, her eyes fluttered open and were immediately filled with tears.

"Serena." Martin's heart lifted at the sight of her awakening, but the tears brimming in her eyes pierced his heart with empathy. He quickly grabbed a tissue and gently wiped her tears away. "What's wrong?"

Don't be afraid, you're safe here with me. No one can hurt you now."

A lump formed in Serena's throat, and she couldn't keep the floodgates closed any longer as her emotions surged forward.

Martin tenderly leaned down and wrapped his arms around her. "You've just been snatched back from death's door. You shouldn't get worked up, I understand, I know you must be feeling terrible."

He stroked her hair soothingly. "It's okay now, it's all in the past. Have a little cry, let it all out, and then let's try to stop, okay?"

As he spoke, Martin gently dabbed the tears from her cheeks. "I can't stand to see you cry."

The doctors and the servants in the room fell into a hushed silence.

They had never seen Martin treat a girl with such tender care before.

This girl, whom they were seeing for the first time, appeared quite ordinary with her bruised forehead and chin.

They couldn't fathom what the master saw in her, to care so deeply.

"Martin." For the first time, Serena clung to Martin's neck with all her might, crying bitterly, her voice hoarse with sorrow. "They really don't want me anymore. They treated me like a criminal. They really

don't care about me anymore."

Martin felt a tightness in his chest and a sting in his nose, moved with compassion as he comforted her,

"Easy now, don't strain yourself, you're still on an IV, and there's a needle in the back of your hand, not

to mention your injuries haven't healed yet. I understand how you feel. I know this must be incredibly

hard for you."

"I've lost everything, my family, and their affection."

"But you still have me. I've promised that no matter what happens, I'll always be by your side. Even if

everyone else is gone, you still have me."

Hearing these words made Serena cry even harder.

There was a time when she had treated him like a spare tire, summoning him at her whim, never truly

valuing him as a real boyfriend, never offering him the respect he deserved.

Yet, when she was discarded like trash by others.

The only one to give her shelter, to offer her a home, was Martin.

After a while, Serena's sobs began to subside as her emotions started to stabilize.

Martin, seeing her red and swollen eyes, felt his own eyes well up with tears. He gently wiped away her

tear stains, "Okay, no more crying."

Perhaps the emotional turmoil was too much, for Serena felt a sharp pain in her heart. Even as she covered her chest with her thickly bandaged hand, she struggled to catch her breath.

"What's the matter?" Martin quickly turned to the doctor at his side.

The doctor examined her and immediately administered an injection.

With the medicine coursing through her, Serena collapsed into Martin's arms like a weary cat.

"Serena's bodily functions have already been compromised to varying degrees," the doctor explained.

"Having just regained consciousness, it's crucial that she keeps her emotions in check to prevent further damage."

Martin, careful not to disturb her, asked, "When will she wake up again?"

"It's hard to say, could be in a little while, or it might not be until tomorrow."

Martin nodded and turned to Dora, "Take good care of her. If she wakes up, let me know immediately."

"Yes, sir."

Martin gently laid Serena back onto the bed and tucked her in, observing her in silence.

The wound on her forehead was still healing. The delay of three days had caused redness and swelling, despite the doctor's efforts.

Fortunately, she hadn't seen her reflection yet, or it would have been another bout of tears.

"I'm going to make a call. Stay with her," Martin said as he stood up and walked into the study to dial that mysterious number.

Chapter 1890

"Awake yet?" The voice on the other end of the phone, distorted by a voice changer, was emotionless.

Martin spoke the truth, "Yeah, she's up."

A few days earlier, he had called Arabella, begging her to save Serena. Arabella had flatly refused.

Just when he was at his wit's end in the hospital, an unknown number called him, saying there was a way to save Serena.

But there was a catch: Martin had to agree to do three things for the caller.

The caller didn't specify what these three tasks were, only insisting that Martin agree first.

In the end, with Serena's life hanging in the balance, Martin agreed.

"What's the first thing I need to do?" Martin asked.

"No rush," came the calm, authoritative reply, even through the voice changer.

"When the time comes for you to act, I'll let you know. If I don't reach out, you don't need to contact me.

Now that your lady's awake, our deal is in full swing. Here's to a pleasant collaboration."

With that, the call ended.

Martin felt uneasy. He had a hunch that the caller was trouble, but given the situation, he had no other choice.

He couldn't just watch the woman he loved slip away.

Initially, the caller had sent him to a place to pick up a pill. After Serena took it, she didn't wake up.

He even suspected the medication was faulty and made threats.

It wasn't until two days later, when the hospital announced that Serena's condition was stable and she could go home to recover, that he began to feel some relief.

Thanks to the high-end medical equipment he had splurged on for Serena, she could spend the holidays at home instead of in the sterile environment of the hospital.

To his surprise, a few days after taking the pill, Serena actually woke up.

While he was overjoyed, he also felt worried about whatever might come next.

Back at Reflections Villa.

Arabella arrived home to find family portraits from last Christmas displayed everywhere.

"Bella, you're back? How do you like these photos?" Louisa, gripping her hand, beamed, "The biggest one goes on the wall, so guests see it right as they come in. And these smaller ones, let's put one on each end table, so guests can see our happy family while they're having coffee."

"Oh please, who cares about those?" Sean commented sourly. "Besides, is the family even complete?"

Anyone would think you've lost a son."

He had missed the last Christmas photo, so he wasn't in the family portraits. Knowing now how adorable and beloved his sister was, he wished he had crawled to be in the photo with her, no matter how badly he had been hurt.

"You're just sour grapes because you missed out." Clark, picking up a photo of him and his sister, admired it contentedly, "I think this one will look perfect on my desk. And this frame is super cute."

"Look at you, it's hideous." Sean scoffed at Clark in the photo, "Look at Bella, she's practically grimacing with you."

"That's not true, she's clearly smiling."

"That's called a forced smile."

Seeing her brothers bicker again, Arabella couldn't help but laugh, "Alright, cut it out, you guys. We'll

take more photos at the New Year's celebration, won't we?"

"How did you know?" Everyone turned to look at her in unison, puzzled. They hadn't leaked a word.

Who had told her?

"Don't we take them every holiday?" Arabella replied with a smile, already anticipating the next round of

family photos and the memories they would capture.