

THE PRINCESS AND THE PAUPER (ARABELLA)

Chapter 2031

Chapter 2031

"Was she picking on you two?" Romeo had already sensed the gist of the situation and was feeling

even more irked with Harriet.

"Actually, we didn't tell you earlier because we didn't want to worry you, but it's not just me here, your

wife got bullied too! That Harriet is just way out of line!" Cathy said, her voice tinged with distress.

"Didn't Arabella break her bones?"

"Broke bones??" Cathy was confused, "Nope, nothing like that. It was just a light touch, like a breeze."

"Then she was already being quite gracious. That should be enough to report back to the Earwood

family."

What was he talking about?? Did he mean to say that when Bella got physical, it was either fractures or

serious injuries?? Was she really that fierce??

"Pass the phone to Arabella."

Cathy obediently handed over the phone.

"Bella." Romeo's voice came through from the other end, now soft and tender,

"You don't have to hold

back when you're with me."

Cathy's eyes widened in shock. Was Bella really that violent?

"If it gets to injuries or worse, I'll take care of it."

"It's mostly because I didn't have dinner; didn't have enough strength," Arabella joked.

"Does your hand hurt?"

"Not at all." Arabella smiled, "I'm not the one in pain."

"That's good. What did Cathy order for you? Is it enough?"

"She didn't order; I did all the ordering."

Cathy couldn't help but interject, "Romeo, I am very generous, okay! It's only when I'm with you that I'm

a miser!"

She muttered to herself, "It's because you always love to penalize me!"

"Well then, be generous all the way, treat me too. I'll be there in ten minutes."

"Romeo, can't you give Arabella some personal space??" Cathy had finally managed to get some

alone time with Bella, and now Romeo was crashing the party.

"Did you help her when she was fighting?"

"Ah? No, I didn't."

Honestly, she was too stunned at the time, she hadn't expected Bella to be so cool and impressive!

Cathy was momentarily lost for words at Romeo's rationale.

"Bella, you hang up first," Romeo's voice softened once again. Read at

It was always Romeo who hung up on them; they had never hung up on him before.

Chapter 2032

Just as Cathy reached for her wallet to settle the bill, Arabella's hand shot out, stopping her dead in her

tracks as her eyes locked onto Romeo.

Cathy was taken aback, Bella was expecting Romeo to foot the bill?

"Isn't Cathy treating us to dinner?" Romeo asked with a devilish grin, seemingly plotting to tease Cathy

a bit.

"Cathy's treat was for me, but now that you're here, you're the eldest; shouldn't you be picking up the

tab?"

Romeo hadn't actually planned to let Cathy pay. Seeing his fiancée so protective of her, he smiled, and

quickly took care of the bill.

Cathy didn't expect Arabella to save her over a thousand bucks just like that. She whispered into

Arabella's ear gratefully, "Thank you, Arabella. Next time, when Romeo's not around, I'll treat you to

dinner."

"I heard that." Romeo helped Arabella into her coat, "Next time, I'll take her abroad with me; we'll work

together. If you want to treat, treat us both, or don't bother."

Cathy was left speechless. Romeo was true to his businessman roots, playing a “buy one, get one free” game with her.

At the Earwood family residence, Harriet stormed home, fuming, only to find her father Addison on a

call. Unable to contain her agitation, she whined, "Dad."

Addison had no time to spare for her. He was answering a super important call at the moment; he

signaled with his hand for her to keep quiet.

Harriet, with frustration brewing inside her, noticed an elegant invitation on the coffee table. It was for a

New Year's gala hosted by a children's charity foundation, inviting the Earwood family to attend.

This gala was known to invite many high-profile individuals, including the Collins family!

"Alright, alright, no problem. See you tomorrow night." Addison wrapped up his call, his face beaming

with excitement. He turned to his daughter, "Now, who's got my little girl all riled up? What happened to

your face?"

"Dad, I've been bullied! Look, even my neck were squeezed!"

Upon closer inspection, the slap mark on her face was evident, and the bruises on her neck were

alarmingly clear.

"Who did this??" Addison's anger flared, "I'm going to make them pay!"

Just as Harriet was about to name the perpetrator, she had a better idea. She tapped the invitation on

the table, "That person will be at the gala tomorrow."

The invitation included a list of guests, partly to showcase the organizer's network and ability to draw

such a high-class crowd at once, and partly to lure more attendees. Some wealthy individuals would

otherwise snub such an event, but if they saw someone they wanted to network with on the guest list,

they'd gladly attend.

"Who is it? I'll take care of that person today! Attend the gala?! Not a chance."

Outside the police station, a swarm of reporters had gathered. Martin emerged from inside, the epitome

of still poise and grace.

A barrage of flickering lights went off as all the reporters swarmed him, clamoring for a statement.

Exiting alongside Martin was his attorney, Lawyer Archibald, who addressed the reporters, "Mr. Cooper

has provided audio recordings that prove he was unaware of his subordinates' actions. They were

coerced by someone else to take the fall. As for who that individual is, the police will reveal it once the

investigation is complete. Please make some room." New chapter available on

Martin's driver pulled up the car, and his bodyguards began to clear a path through the crowd.

Chapter 2033

"Mr. Cooper, could you shed some light on what you discussed with your two associates before their demise?"

"Mr. Cooper, are you allies or adversaries with the Collins family?"

"There's a rumor on the internet that you're dating Serena Lott. Is there any truth to this?"

At the mention of Serena, Martin's stride halted. The press, sensing a juicy story, unleashed a barrage of queries.

"Do you mind Serena Lott's past?"

"Do the Cooper family approve of your relationship with her?"

"She's reportedly done some unsavory things to the Collins family. Is that true, or is she being framed?"

"Are you planning to marry her?"

"Are you and Serena Lott living together?"

Martin's gaze settled on the reporter before him, "I've seen the online gossip. Yes, Serena and I are in

a relationship, and we're planning to get engaged soon."

"Engaged???"

All the reporters were stunned. Despite the poor reputation the girl had, Martin still intended to

propose? Was that for real??

"Mr. Cooper, is this true love, or are you using the engagement to deflect from the current scandal?"

"Are you trying to distract us from the investigation into your associates' deaths?"

"Do you think Serena Lott is a good girl?"

"Do your parents support this marriage?"

"I love her deeply, and we'll announce the engagement date in a couple of days," Martin stretched out

and signaled that he was done with the interview and then got into his car.

"Mr. Cooper, please, don't go. Mr. Cooper."

The reporters chased after the car, hungry for more details.

At For-ena Villa.

This led to the public digging into the wealth of the Cooper family and Martin's prowess.

Serena's lips curled into a smug smile; she couldn't be pleased more, "These losers wouldn't dare

make a peep if actually threatened with legal action."

She took a bit of an apple joyously as she continued scanning the comments. Content of

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Her social media was flooded with more than one message from the netizens asking for a tutorial on

how to win over a wealthy heir and to have him proudly declare an engagement.

Chapter 2034

The words hit Serena like a dagger to the heart. It had to be someone she knew! How could she let

Martin see such a comment?!

Serena deleted the message without hesitation. But that only seemed to fuel the commenter's fire, who

began to relentlessly paste the same message over and over, flooding her comment section with

hundreds of copies, each followed by a taunting challenge. [Go on, keep deleting.]

Serena was fuming.

"Serena."

Just then, Martin returned. In a panic, Serena logged off and locked her screen before wheeling

towards him with open arms.

Martin wrapped her in a warm embrace.

"I'm just so relieved you're back safe." Serena hugged him as tears brimmed in her eyes, "It's all good

as long as you're okay. I know someone's been smearing your name. They're so cruel. Why did they

have to pick on you? If only I could get my hands on them, I'd tear them limb from limb."

Martin chuckled and stroked her back, "Don't worry. I had a recording of a call with one of my guys at

the time, and although another guy only managed to send me a text before he died, previous call

records can prove my innocence."

"As long as you're okay." Serena released him and flashed a bright smile, though concern quickly

creased her brow, "You announced our engagement so quickly. What if your parents see?"

"The reporters were already asking about us; I had to clarify things and give you a proper status."

Martin said, gently patting her head, "Don't worry about my parents; I'll continue working on them. I

heard from Dora that you didn't eat a bite of dinner after I left."

"I was worried about you." In truth, once the servants were out of sight, Serena had indulged in a fair

amount of snacks. With the abundance at home, a few missing packages would go unnoticed for a

while.

At that moment, Dora knocked and brought in the dinner freshly prepared in the kitchen. Martin had

asked her to bring it up.

"I'll feed you," Martin told the girl in the wheelchair tenderly.

"You haven't eaten either. We can eat together. Don't worry about my hand, I can still manage a spoon."

Martin was amused by her again, "If you're worried about me, I'll eat while feeding you."

Serena feigned to blush at that.

Dora set the meal on the coffee table in the room, smiling knowingly, "Well, I'll leave you two alone then."

She exited to give them privacy.

Standing under the shade of the trees, Cathy was sharing amusing stories with Bella when suddenly,

the lights of the restaurant dimmed, and all the street lamps and illuminations went dark. Updated at

"What's up with the power outage?" Cathy's words were cut short as Arabella yanked her back.

Chapter 2035

If it weren't for Arabella's lightning-quick reflexes, that knife would have sailed through the air and pierced her heart.

Suddenly, from every direction, a slew of assailants appeared, their faces obscured by black masks,

each one wielding a switchblade, lunging swiftly towards the two women.

"Ah. Who the hell are you??" Cathy cried out in terror.

What shocked her even more was the realization that Arabella was faster and more precise than any of them.

As two blades aimed for Arabella simultaneously, she kicked the attacker in front of her and deftly

grabbed his knife, slashing at the arm of the assailant behind her, who immediately started bleeding profusely.

The perilous moments flashed before Cathy's eyes as Arabella pushed and pulled her around like a puppet on strings, until finally, Cathy's gaze settled on the scene - all the attackers were down, sprawled on the ground.

Cathy was utterly astounded; there must have been at least a dozen of them, each clutching their wounds, writhing in pain on the ground. Blood was everywhere.

"Leaving you all alive is a message. Go tell your boss I'm definitely coming for him. And tell him to pony up for some real talent next time; you guys are just amateur hour."

Cathy was stunned, her eyes wide with shock as she looked at Bella, who was too cool for school, throwing down such badass lines to the defeated hitmen.

"Take your toys and scram," Arabella tossed the switchblade in front of them, a gesture that was more insulting than injurious.

A few attackers would have left if they could, but Arabella had been ruthless; they couldn't even stand without help. Eventually, they managed to stagger away with the aid of others.

A beam of headlights cut through the darkness, illuminating the gruesome trail of blood on the ground.

Romeo stepped out of the car swiftly and saw the retreating figures, "What happened here?"

"Nothing much, just asking them to send a message for me."

Cathy was in shock again, Arabella's tone was just too casual. She nonchalantly opened the car door, gesturing for Cathy to get in first.

For Cathy, it was her first encounter with a scene straight out of a thriller movie, and she found herself

frozen in place. Seeing her like this, Romeo uttered helplessly, "Buck up."

Since Bella wanted to send a message, he decided not to pursue, only asking, "You hurt anywhere?"

"Playing with rookies, how could I get hurt?"

Cathy felt like she'd been sucker-punched hearing Bella's comment. Such a terrifying ordeal, and to

Arabella, it was like playing with kids.

"Glad you're okay. Seems like the mastermind couldn't wait any longer and wanted to silence us." As

Romeo spoke, he turned to Cathy, "Still not over it?"

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Chapter 2036

"Fantastic, I'll have some gowns delivered for you," Louisa exclaimed with joy.

"No need, Mom. My walk-in closet is already bursting at the seams. I'll pick something out tomorrow."

"Well, you might want to check with Romeo about his outfit. If your colors and styles complement each

other, you'll look like the perfect pair."

Kenneth, lounging on the armchair and glancing up from the evening news, chimed in with a chuckle,

"Your mom is hinting that she wants you to flaunt your fiancé at the gala."

"Why put it so bluntly!" Louisa playfully scolded her husband before muttering to herself, "But it's not a

bad idea anyway. Romeo's such a catch; there are plenty of women out there eyeing him. If they see

how well he treats Bella, the sensible ones will back off on their own. As for the rest, Jennifer and I will

step in to ward them off one by one."

Arabella couldn't help but laugh, "Is Romeo going?"

"He usually skips these kinds of events, leaving the McMillian family's eldest son to make an

appearance. But now that your engagement news is out, and he's been officially invited, I think it's up

to you. If you're going, he'll surely attend. You two should definitely wear matching outfits."

"What your mom means is, give Romeo a call. See if he's going. If he is, you two can ride together.

Your mom and I will take another car."

Arabella nodded, just about to message Romeo when her phone lit up with a notification. It was

Romeo, "Bella, are you going to the gala tomorrow night?"

"What about you?" She texted back.

"If you're going, I'm going."

"Then I'll pick out a suit for you."

"Great, I'll pick you up tomorrow night. We can get dressed and head over together."

Arabella sent back an "OK".

For-ena Villa.

After Martin fed Serena, he pushed Serena's wheelchair into the garden for a stroll.

"These cherry blossoms are beautiful," Serena admired, looking up at the thousands of pink petals above.

Martin plucked a branch with about a dozen blossoms and handed it to her.

"If you like them, I'll plant more. That way, you can enjoy this view from your window every winter."

Serena's smile was about to bloom but as if she thought of something, suddenly her expression changed.

"Serena??" Martin asked, puzzled.

"Serena, what's wrong?" Martin noticed something was amiss; he looked at her, his voice laden with

concern, "Is it your heart?" Content belongs to

"Serena??" Seeing her in such agony, Martin sensed the urgency, "Serena??"

Chapter 2037

"It hurts." Serena's voice came out through clenched teeth, the pain so intense it was nearly

unbearable, "Martin, it hurts so much."

"Don't be afraid. I'm here." Martin quickly took her hands, and raised his gaze to Dr. Leona, "What's

going on? Why is she in so much pain all of a sudden?"

"Sir, the report shows that her levels are way off the charts. I can't be sure what's causing it. I

recommend taking her to the hospital for a comprehensive evaluation."

Seeing tears streaming down Serena's face as she writhed in pain, Martin didn't hesitate. He scooped

her up in his arms, "Get the car ready. We're heading to the hospital."

On the way, Serena coughed up blood, shocking Martin to his core. He shouted at the driver to step on

it.

They reached Hope Hospital in no time, with Martin sprinting towards the emergency room, carrying

Serena in his arms.

Serena had gone into a coma; as the ER doctors took one look at her, they had her rushed into the

ICU.

There were various medical instruments inside, which could constantly monitor vital signs to tell each

parameter symbolized normality or not. Martin stepped back, utterly perplexed till now about what had

happened.

He had only just fed Serena dinner and taken her for a walk along the estate's garden paths. How

could she have fallen so ill, vomiting blood no less? Could the food have been tampered with?

With this troubling thought, Martin called his staff, ordering a thorough inspection of the evening's

ingredients. He also commanded all servants to remain on the premises. If someone had poisoned

Serena, they wouldn't get away with it.

Martin sat outside the ICU, his mind dragging him back to the night he had brought Serena home from

the Collins family. She had been in critical condition then too, and he had spent an agonizing night on a

bench, just like this.

Feeling utterly drained, he suddenly became aware of a disapproving gaze upon him. Lifting his eyes,

he was met with the stern look of his father, Ansel Cooper.

"Dad, what are you doing here?" Martin spotted his father sitting on a nearby bench, his sister

alongside him, and two bodyguards stationed outside another ICU room.

A sense of foreboding washed over him. He had been so focused on following Serena's gurney into the

ICU that he hadn't even noticed his own family in the corridor.

"What's going on?" Martin glanced at his father and sister, but neither responded.

He turned his attention to the bodyguards. One of them spoke up, "Mrs. Cooper saw the news about

your wedding announcement. It set off her heart condition. She's in the ICU now."

Before Martin could even process this information, Ansel stood up and slapped him across the face.

Martin, seeing his sister in such distress, bore the brunt of her anger quietly, asking with genuine

concern after a while, "What did the doctors say?"

Diana pushed him away, "Just go. You're only making Mom worse. She doesn't want to see you right

now!"

"You don't deserve to be a Cooper; get lost!" Ansel fumed, "Get out of my sight!" Updated at

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Chapter 2038

Martin could only come to the hospital's terrace, straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of his father and

sister through the distance. In two separate ICU rooms on this floor lay the two people he cherished

most.

The following evening, the annual charity gala was the talk of the town, which was held at the five-star

Summerfield Hotel.

When Romeo's car pulled up, the press swarmed like bees to honey. Without the dozens of security

personnel maintaining order, they would have surely broken through the velvet ropes to cluster around

Romeo.

Romeo stepped out looking as dashing as ever, the cut of his suit making him appear as if he'd

stepped right out of a graphic novel with his sharp brows and starry eyes.

The moment he opened the car door and held Arabella's hand, the paparazzi's flashes went into

overdrive. Their matching designer outfits - clearly the work of Maestro Stylish - screamed couple

goals.

They were set to be the talk of the evening.

Reporters went live as Romeo's hand found Arabella's slender waist, the pair making a grand entrance

into the hotel.

Trailing behind them, Kenneth and Louisa greeted the crowd with beaming smiles, exuding warmth and

charisma.

Meanwhile, Serena had just opened her eyes on the hospital bed when Dora exclaimed with joy,

"Serena, you're finally awake."

Lifting her heavy eyelids, Serena's voice came out hoarse and weak, "Where am I?"

"In the ICU."

It was a high-class hospital room equipped with enough medical facilities for constant monitoring, ready

for immediate medical intervention if the patient's condition worsened.

"Mr. Cooper went to speak with the doctor about your condition; he'll be back soon. Are you feeling any better?" Dora asked with concern.

Serena's face was ashen, and pain shot through her at intervals, leaving her to whisper feebly, "It still hurts. Did the doctors say what caused it?"

Dora shook her head, "A couple of doctors have already examined you, but none can pinpoint the

cause. Mr. Cooper even had last night's dinner checked - no issues with the food. All the staff's alibis

check out, no motives, no opportunities. Nobody seems to have harmed you."

What in the world was happening then? Neither Dora nor Serena could understand it.

Serena closed her eyes feebly, only to open them again moments later, "Call the nurse, I need painkillers."

The pain was unbearable.

She fumbled with the remote, and the screen lit up with live coverage of tonight's charity gala.

Serena saw Romeo and Arabella's grand appearance, the lavish setting, the press camping out, and

Kenneth and Louisa waving affectionately at the cameras, her heart twisting in agony, a suffocating

feeling creeping over her.

Serena couldn't hold back any longer; a gush of blood spilled from her lips.

Chapter 2039

At the gala.

Harriet watched, seething, as Arabella decently stood by Romeo's side, guests flocking to them, who

were eager to rub elbows with them.

They looked like an ideal couple, a perfect pair, their very presence enough to make anyone green with envy.

Finally, Arabella was alone, and Harriet's eyes gleamed with a vengeful spark, "Dad, I saw the person who hit me!"

"Lead the way." Addison said, setting his drink aside and rising with anger in his voice, "I want to see who had the nerve to lay a hand on you."

As Harriet led the way, they neared Arabella. Suddenly, Addison's voice rose with excitement, "At last, I find you here!"

Harriet looked on, stunned as her normally haughty father now treated Arabella with the utmost politeness and respect, bending at the waist to shake her hand. Arabella returned the gesture with a familiar smile, as though greeting an old friend.

"Bart Monroe, it's been ages," Arabella greeted Addison.

"I was thrilled to learn from our call last night that you'd be attending tonight's ball. I cleared my

schedule just to see you, and I'm overjoyed that we've met." The joy and gratitude were unmistakable

in Addison's eyes, "You've been busy, and I've never had the chance to properly thank you. After all

you've been through recently, I haven't been of much help, but I want you to know, if there's anything I

can do for you, just say the word."

Harriet was dumbfounded. When had Arabella become her father's savior? She had no clue.

"Bart, you've already been a great help," Arabella said with a gentle tone.

"That's nothing. Should you ever need anything, even if I'm on my last breath, I will pay you back!"

"But, Dad." Harriet couldn't help but interject.

"Show some respect! This is Arabella, the Earwood family's friend. She saved your grandfather's life,

and mine too. You're a few months younger than Arabella, so you should take her as your sister."

Sister? Considered Bella as her sister?

Addison chuckled and introduced Harriet to Arabella, "This is my daughter Harriet, recently returned

from abroad."

Arabella's lips curled in amusement, "We met yesterday."

So this was Addison's daughter? She had heard he mentioned his daughter, but had no idea it was

Harriet.

"Oh? Do you know each other???" Addison was a bit surprised.

At the time, Romeo, having finished his conversation with the guests, approached them, "Bart,

business must be good these days."

Addison gestured humbly with his little finger. New chapter available on

"A check?" Addison turned perplexed to his daughter, "Why did you give Arabella a check?"

Chapter 2040

"Dammit!" Addison slapped his daughter on the shoulder. He restrained himself from striking her face,

mindful of the many guests present.

"What kind of nonsense are you spouting? The two McMillian families are flesh and blood, kin through

and through. Who are you to stir up strife? And what's this about buying affection? Are you trying to

meddle in their relationship?"

Addison's furious voice drew the attention of a few guests, and Harriet wished she could just disappear.

To think, her father, who had never so much as raised his voice to her, was now making a public spectacle for the sake of Arabella and at the expense of the Earwood family's reputation.

"Dad, can you please keep it down," Harriet pleaded, acutely aware of the judgmental gazes piercing her.

"Now you care about dignity? What were you thinking before? I sent you overseas to study, to learn

something worthwhile, not to come back and wreck other people's relationships! The McMillian family

and the Collins family have an engagement, and you want to stick your nose in? Have you lost your

mind?"

"Dad!" Harriet was frantic, her father's voice was too loud, everyone could hear them, and she wanted

nothing more than to crawl into a hole and hide.

Addison, fuming, made a phone call, "Come here and take Ms. Monroe home."

After hanging up, he turned back to Harriet, furious, "We'll deal with it until we get home!"

"Dad, she hit me too!!" Harriet tried to explain that the bruises on her face and neck from last night

were Arabella's doing.

Addison cut her off, "And deservedly so! You're trying to break up a couple, causing discord within the

McMillian family. You're lucky you didn't end up with broken bones!"

He then looked apologetically at Arabella, "I'm truly sorry. I've failed to raise her properly, and you had

to step in."

He had thought the marks on his daughter's face and neck were from a man, never imagining they

were from Arabella.

Having seen Arabella handle troublemakers before, he knew her strength, her ferocity. And yet, she

had been gentle with his daughter.

"Count yourself lucky she didn't do worse! And apologize to Arabella, Romeo, and Cathy this instant!"

Addison hissed at his daughter.

"Dad," Harriet had never been so mortified in her life.

"It's fine," Arabella and the others said in unison, seemingly indifferent to formalities.

Addison's face was a mask of regret as he turned to Arabella, "Thank you for sparing my unworthy

daughter last night. I'll see to her discipline when we get home."

"Let's not dwell on it, Bart. Don't be upset; it's bad for your health," Arabella understood his ways. Once

home, Harriet would no doubt face consequences.

At that moment, the security appeared, offering a hand, "Ms. Monroe, please."

Harriet, utterly embarrassed, quickly left with her head down.

Arabella nodded, trusting his word. He did this not to repay a favor but to uphold the Earwood family's

reputation and values, which did not condone meddling in others' affairs.

"Bella, what happened?" Louisa approached, noticing Addison's departure and her daughter's.

Updated at

"Nothing," Arabella didn't tell her mother what happened, not wanting to worry her.

Louisa knew her daughter was the founder of QY, which dealt not only in fashion but also in jewelry.