

# **The Double ( or More ?) Life of The Fake Heiress**

## **#Chapter 11 - Read The Double ( or More ?) Life of The Fake Heiress Chapter 11**

### **Chapter 11**

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Anyway, they hadn't settled on a school yet.

Emmitt's eyes danced with curiosity as he observed his sister's calm demeanor. Was she serious about having chosen a school? Mirabella shifted lazily in her seat, crossing her legs as she spoke with an indifferent tone, "Parkside High School."

At her words, a bemused expression quickly surfaced on Summer's face. She turned her head to Mirabella, "Parkside High School? Like, the Parkside High School downtown?"

Mirabella just hummed an affirmation, still nonchalant.

Summer couldn't help but feel like she'd just heard the world's biggest joke. Auburn High School would have been believable, but Parkside High School? That was a stretch. Known as the city's top-tier high school, nationally ranked in the top five, it was a breeding ground for the cream of the academic crop. The idea seemed ludicrous, considering Mirabella's past performance required a generous donation to even get her into a decent local school. A snicker flickered in Summer's eyes as she thought of her sister's grand delusions.

"The bar at Parkside High isn't exactly low," Summer said with a smirk.

Emmitt, sensing his sister might be getting in over her head and wanting to save her from embarrassment in front of Summer, cleared his throat and interjected, "Let's discuss the school situation with Mom and Dad back home before making any decisions."

Knowing that Emmitt was trying to give Mirabella an out, Summer dropped her gaze and decided not to pursue the topic any further. "If you need help, just say the word. My dad knows several principals around town. A quick call and you're all set."

Emmitt reached out to tune the car stereo, casually acknowledging her offer with a non—committal “yeah.”

Mirabella’s fingers tapped rhythmically on her thigh as she gazed out of the car window, too laid-back to engage any further. Her eyes took in the cityscape outside—the hustle and bustle, the dazzling neon lights, and the colorful nightlife that underscored the city’s vibrancy, a far cry from some quaint backwater town.

Before long, the car pulled into an older residential complex. It was clear from the surroundings that it had seen better days. The Davis family owned a top-floor duplex in the building, an advantage of the older, low-rise architecture. Mr. and Mrs. Davis were already waiting at the door, exchanging nervous glances as they heard the elevator ding. Their eyes fixed eagerly on the elevator doors.

Emmitt and Summer emerged first, followed by Mirabella.

“Mom, Dad, we’ve got Mira back.” Summer announced sweetly.

Delilah barely glanced at her before focusing all her attention on Mirabella, walking towards her with a mix of excitement and awkwardness.

Summer’s smile stiffened momentarily as she realized she’d been blatantly overlooked. Davis family wasn’t wealthy. but Summer was the cherished youngest daughter, a position now seemingly threatened by Mirabella’s return. Despite her disdain for such favoritism, Summer suppressed her irritation as something else crossed her mind. Delilah approached Mirabella, her expression becoming distant as she surveyed the girl who bore such a striking resemblance to herself. Her gaze shifted between Mirabella and Summer, emotions flooding her heart.

Chapter 12

## **Chapter 12**

Chapter 12

From a young age, Delilah always found herself at the center of her friends’ playful jests whenever she brought her daughter around her besties. They would tease her incessantly, scrutinizing her and her daughter’s faces, joking

suggesting that maybe there had been a mix-up at the hospital because the child bore no resemblance to her.

It wasn't as though her daughter wasn't attractive. Quite the contrary. All of Delilah's children had been cherubic in their youth. Yet Summer, when compared with her older brothers, seemed remarkably plain, compounded by the fact that both Delilah and her husband were exceptionally good-looking. This only fueled further teasing from her friends.

As Delilah reminisced, there was a painful truth to those playful words. Shaking off her wandering thoughts, she softly called out. "Mira."

Mirabella's expression remained as impassive as ever, lacking the excitement one might expect upon seeing one's birth parents. She merely nodded a polite greeting.

Seeing Mirabella's frosty demeanor, Summer quickly jumped in to explain, "Mom, Mira just got back from the countryside. She might need some time to get used to everything again."

Delilah had encountered Mirabella a few months prior and had sensed her withdrawn nature. So, while she felt a twinge of disappointment that Mirabella didn't call her 'mom,' she wasn't particularly surprised. After all being mistakenly switched at birth and raised by the Gilbert family in a quaint town before returning to her biological family was bound to require an adjustment period. Patience was key.

Delilah couldn't help but cast a complicated glance at Summer, with a fleeting shadow crossing her face. She quickly masked it with an indifferent smile. "Summer, you've been such a dear, going to the airport to fetch Mira. It's getting late, and your biological parents must be wondering about you. They'll be upset if they know you're here."

She paused, then turned to her eldest son. "Emmitt, would you mind taking Ms. Summer home?"

The shift from 'Summer' to 'Ms. Summer' flushed Summer's cheeks with embarrassment. She opened her mouth to protest. "Mom..."

Delilah looked at Summer with a hidden ache but didn't let it show. Collecting her thoughts, Delilah's smile seemed to grow more distant. She cut Summer

off before she could say anything. "From now on, it might be best if you address me as Ms. Delilah."

Mirabella's eyebrows raised slightly in surprise.

Delilah carried herself with an air of grace and composure. Although she was in her fifties, she looked no more than in her thirties, with barely a wrinkle to betray her age. Despite her smile, there was an undeniable strength in her demeanor- a commanding presence rarely seen in ordinary women.

Mirabella watched thoughtfully, her gaze introspective.

Feeling a deep sense of humiliation, Summer bit her lip as her eyes misted over. Her face seemed to bear the weight of a great injustice. She couldn't understand how the woman who had once doted on her could suddenly become so cutting, all because her biological daughter had returned. If that was the case, it seemed a cruel hypocrisy. Summer felt deceived.

The atmosphere grew tense and awkward.

"Cough, cough," Shawn, who had been silent, cleared his throat and spoke up. "Emmitt, please take Summer home." His words, meant to break the ice, only seemed to heighten the discomfort.

Emmitt nodded in agreement, though he didn't understand why his parents wouldn't let Summer stay. He didn't ask any questions- after all, she was now considered the heiress to the illustrious Gilbert family, a status not to be taken lightly, and the Gilberts were known to be a tough crowd.

## **Chapter 13**

### Chapter 13

As Emmitt and Summer stepped into the elevator, Delilah's facade of polite unfamiliarity instantly gave way to a tender watchfulness. She turned to Mirabella with a voice softer than a southern breeze, cooing. "Sweetheart, let's get you inside..."

Before the elevator doors slid shut, Summer caught a glimpse of her foster mother's abrupt switch in demeanor. Summer's face turned a shade of unpleasant darkness in the blink of an eye.

The Davis residence wasn't exactly a mansion, but their two-story duplex boasted a comfortable size. The décor was a refined blend of classical elegance with furniture that gave the impression of heirloom quality. You could tell the homeowners had a discerning eye.

Mirabella took her time surveying the place until her gaze landed on a framed piece of painting on the wall. A flicker of surprise crossed her eyes, but it was quickly dismissed as she mentally rejected the possibility of it being an original masterpiece. Even though the Davis family didn't seem to be living hand-to-mouth, they were hardly in the league of owning priceless art. The painting was likely a replica.

Shawn, who had been ruminating on how to break the ice with his daughter, caught the brief moment of her attention on the artwork. He saw an opportunity and spun it. "Mira, do you have an appreciation for painting?" he asked, his face blooming with an easy smile.

Mirabella's eyebrows arched slightly as she lazily replied, "Nope, not interested."

Shawn was momentarily taken aback, and his throat clogged with a barrage of artsy topics that never saw the light of day. After a moment, he managed to utter. "Oh, you're not, huh..."

Seeing him look a bit deflated, Mirabella added after a thoughtful pause. "Different strokes for different folks." That seemed to restore Shawn's paternal pride, and he eagerly followed up. "So, what are your interests then?"

Mirabella, recalling her life before this body hop, fell into silence. Then, lifting her head to face Shawn with earnest eyes, she confessed. "Studying."

The response almost broke Shawn's composure, his eyebrow twitching violently. How was a girl notorious for skipping classes now claiming her passion was studying?

Shawn observed his seemingly serious daughter and began to wonder if he had been misled during his previous inquiries at the small-town school.

"Shawn, are you showing off that old scribble again?" Delilah's voice cut through the air as she carried dishes from the kitchen, her eyes casting a playful yet scathing glance at him. With a commanding shout, she added, "Come and set the table already!"

“It's not showing off.” Shawn protested, touching his nose before reluctantly heading toward the kitchen, muttering under his breath, “Why does everything look like junk to you? That piece is actually...”

His words trailed off into an unintelligible mumble, so Mirabella didn't quite catch the rest. However, the term 'old scribble' used by Delilah was loud and clear.

After dinner, Delilah led Mirabella upstairs. The second floor housed four rooms. The one prepared for Mirabella was at the far end of the hallway on the right. As Delilah pushed open the door, she explained, “This room used to belong to Leo. He's got ants in his pants and hardly ever shows up at home, so I decided to give the place a makeover. Take a look, do you like it?”

## **Chapter 14**

### Chapter 14

The lights flicked on to reveal a room awash in a sea of pink: wallpaper, wardrobe, queen-sized bed, curtains, and even the writing desk. It was as if everything, barring the floor, had surrendered to the hue. Mirabella blinked. Her eyes felt assaulted by the color.

Delilah stood proudly amidst her creation, the princess room she had meticulously arranged. “This design masterminded by a renowned interior designer. What do you think? Isn't it girly, dreamy, and cozy?”

Mirabella's lips twitched subtly. She scanned the room once more, finding little to compliment in the style that seemed devoid of aesthetic appeal. A well-known designer surely wouldn't tarnish their reputation, she mused. Therefore, it was highly likely that her mother had been duped. After all many shady decorators were notorious for exploiting the designer label to fleece unsuspecting clients.

Pondering for a few seconds and determined not to crush her mother's spirit, Mirabella finally responded with a measured. “If you're happy with it, that's what matters.”

As her yawned, her stunning features softened in the warm light, a veil of fatigue barely concealing her weariness.

Delilah touched her nose, sensing an ambiguous undertone to her daughter's words. But with Mirabella's drowsiness, she decided not to probe further and simply advised her to rest well before leaving the room.

Once the door shut, Mirabella pressed her fingers against her temples, surrounded by an unrelenting sea of pink.

She unpacked her suitcase, retrieved her pajamas, and headed straight for the bathroom. She was, indeed, exhausted. After competing in the city, she rushed back to the county early in the morning and then traveled non-stop to Ashford. Even the most resilient would feel the toll of such a day.

Meanwhile, back at the Gilbert family home. Summer couldn't sleep. Tossing and turning, she thought about Mirabella, about the way her foster parents had treated her that evening. Frustrated, she grabbed her phone and started scrolling through Twitter.

Since joining Superstar Camp, Summer's sweet voice and cute image had garnered countless fans. With her agency pushing her image through various channels, she became a fixture in the public eye. Thus, her latest airport photos with a few fans naturally made their way onto Twitter's trending topics.

The photos were flattering. Her fans had polished them up. Within just a couple of hours, the comments had surged to nearly ten thousand—a testament to her skyrocketing popularity despite not having officially debuted.

The only flaw was that two of the photos captured Mirabella's silhouette in the background. While her face was obscured, and the fans had blurred the backdrop, Mirabella's tall, slender figure and her distinctive aura somehow added a mysterious beauty to the images. It was indistinct yet intriguing.

Summer frowned, finding the two photos irksome. After a few seconds of contemplation, she began reading the comments. Although some fans were curious about the masked person, their inquiries went largely unnoticed, swallowed up by the sea of comments.

Summer exhaled a breath she hadn't realized she'd been holding and continued scrolling through the adulations, which gradually soothed her sour mood. She chided herself for the ridiculous sense of threat she had felt earlier.

So what if Mirabella, that country bumpkin, is easy on the eyes? She's still a coarse, vulgar person with no redeeming qualities, just a pretty face. And

even if she goes back to the Davis family, what difference does it make? Could she ever outshine Summer?

With a scoff, Summer turned off her phone.

## **Chapter 15**

### Chapter 15

The next morning, Mirabella woke up bright and early. Her internal clock was as reliable as the Big Ben, sounding off at six a.m., rain or shine. However, due to the change of scenery, she lounged in bed for a few extra minutes before slowly crawling out and shuffling to the bathroom for a leisurely wash-up. After emerging, she plopped down on the floor, legs crossed, and started to sort through her suitcase.

She hadn't packed many clothes, just two outfits. The remaining space was taken up by an assortment of unlabeled bottles and jars, along with two iron boxes that whispered tales of antiquity.

Mirabella only took out the clothes, pondered for a moment, picked two bottles from the collection, and then zipped up the suitcase without bothering to reset the combination lock.

Scanning the room, her gaze finally settled on the wardrobe door. She stood, grabbed her suitcase, and walked over. Swinging open the door, she was surprised to see it filled with brand new clothing that, while lacking tags, seemed of decent quality. As for the style—Mirabella had no qualms, finding it a vast improvement over the room's overly girly decor.

After stuffing her suitcase in a corner, Mirabella changed into activewear and twisted her long hair into a bun before heading out of the room. She had always been one for morning runs and wasn't about to let a change of location disrupt her routine.

By 8 a.m., Delilah had breakfast ready and waiting on the table. She glanced towards the staircase, then at her husband Shawn, who was engrossed in the newspaper in the living room. "Shawn, should we wake our daughter for breakfast?"

Shawn adjusted his glasses on the bridge of his nose and replied, "Let the kid sleep in. She was exhausted last night and went to bed late. No need to disturb her dreams."

"Alright." Delilah nodded, about to add something when the doorbell rang. She looked puzzled, "Who could that be this early in the morning?"

Shawn put down the paper, thoughtful. "Could it be the accountant?" Delilah shot him a look. "Emmitt, it's only the 20th. Payday is still a few days away."

Shawn had an 'aha' moment, then added, "Let the accountant know not to come by the house this month. Our daughter just got back, and I don't want to startle her."

Delilah thought it over and agreed. "Sure, I'll tell them. Let me check who's at the door."

Soon after, Delilah opened the inner door to find Mirabella standing outside, leaving her stunned for a few seconds. Snapping out of it, she quickly unlocked the door with a surprised tone, "Mira, what are you doing outside?"

Fresh from her run, Mirabella's face was flushed with the exhilaration of exercise, a few strands of hair sticking to her cheeks, and a bead of sweat tracing a path down her face, which she wiped away with a hand. "I like to get in a workout in the morning."

Delilah was pleasantly surprised, nodding her head, "A morning run is great, a very good habit." But after a brief pause, she hurriedly added, "It's also fine for a girl to sleep in once in a while, you know. It's good for the skin."

"Breakfast is ready. Why don't you take a quick shower and come down?" Delilah said as she walked back inside, continuing the conversation.

"Okay." "Oh, and I've put some new clothes in your closet. I just bought them. See if you like them. If not, we can get more."

Get more?

Mirabella stopped in her tracks, her expression complex. "Mom, are we rich or something?" 1/2

12:37

## Chapter 15

Delilah turned around, her face a picture of astonishment, the words “Or I could have a designer come over and tailor-make them for you” suddenly frozen on her lips.

## Chapter 16

### Chapter 16

In a heartbeat, Mirabella found herself wrapped in Delilah’s arms. Mirabella blinked, caught off guard by Delilah’s embrace. “Oh, my sweet girl, you finally called me Mom!” Delilah’s voice quivered with excitement, almost on the verge of tears.

Mirabella sighed. It was as if they were on different wavelengths.

Ten minutes later, after a brisk shower, Mirabella descended the stairs in a laid-back, oversized tee paired with distressed jeans. Despite the casual clean look, she exuded a cool vibe.

“My daughter’s just so gorgeous,” Delilah mused, resting her chin in her hand as she admired Mirabella walking towards her. Even though she wasn’t wearing the clothes she had bought for her, it didn’t stop her from cheering on her daughter’s beauty.

Shawn chimed in with a proud nod. “She’s definitely got my good genes.”

Delilah gave him a playful roll of her eyes. “Get real, she obviously takes after me.”

“Whatever you say, dear.” Shawn quickly conceded, the picture of a doting husband.

As Mirabella drew closer, she overheard their banter, and felt bombarded by their public display of affection.

Soon, Mirabella took her seat at the dining table. She had always been a girl of few words, often maintaining her silence during the meal responding to Shawn and Delilah’s occasional conversation starters with monosyllabic ‘yeahs’ and ‘uh—huhs.’\*

Shawn and Delilah didn't interpret their daughter's reticence as arrogance. Instead, they felt a twinge of guilt. This poor child must've been so lonesome, so starved of affection, to develop such a solitary nature.

Unaware of their thoughts, Mirabella finished her breakfast. Noticing Delilah occasionally press her temples, she seemed to remember something and quickly went upstairs. She returned in a couple of minutes, holding two small bottles she had retrieved from her suitcase, and handed one to each of her parents.

"Here, I got these for you." Mirabella said softly, her exquisite face wearing a casual expression.

Delilah examined the small bottle with curiosity as she unscrewed the cap. "What's this? It's quite a fancy little thing— As soon as the lid was off, a rich herbal scent wafted out. The aroma instantly made Delilah feel refreshed as if her spirit had been cleansed. She suffered from chronic migraines that flared up now and then. With no cure in sight, she relied on painkillers for relief. This morning, her head had started to hurt, but she didn't want to show her pain in front of her daughter. This scent miraculously seemed to soothe her migraine in an instant.

"Mira, what is this?" Delilah asked, surprised and delighted, inhaling the scent, feeling the urge to bask in it forever. Mirabella saw Delilah visibly relax and nonchalantly replied, "They're just herbal fragrance pills... kind of like incense. They help with focus, relaxation, and pain relief."

She paused, then added, "Keep one by your bedside each night. It should help with your migraines."

Delilah was astounded, "How did you know I suffer from migraines!" Not just Delilah, even Shawn looked surprised. "I noticed you pressing your temples at breakfast," Mirabella said with clear eyes, offering no further explanation.

Delilah was taken aback, not expecting such attentiveness. But to deduce she had migraines just from that seemed almost magical.

## **Chapter 17**

Chapter 17

Delilah was daydreaming about some fantastical scenarios when Mirabella's voice reached her ears once again. "These fragrance pills are just a supplement, not for long-term use. If you want a complete cure Mirabella paused, then casually added, "I'll have to get a friend to send over some more targeted medication when I get the chance."

Delilah's eyes snapped open in surprise. "Are you saying there's a cure for my headaches?" With a cocky raise of her eyebrow, Mirabella said, "Of course." Others might fail, but her? Please, this was child's play to her.

Delilah touched her nose, not quite buying her daughter's words. After all, even the doctors had claimed it was incurable. Her gaze shifted and rested on her husband's hand. "Is your dad's bottle also filled with these fragrance pills?"

The very idea of using herbal medicine and storing it in a ceramic jar gave off an vintage vibe that seemed out of place in the modern world. Delilah thought with an inward chuckle.

Mirabella shook her head, her tone indifferent. "No, it isn't."

"What's in my bottle then?" Shawn was genuinely curious. His attention had been on his wife earlier, and he hadn't opened the little ceramic jar.

A stray lock of hair fell beside Mirabella's cheek, which she lazily tucked behind her ear before replying in a drawl "Well it's not exactly medicine, but you can think of it as a sort of 'Super Tonic Pill. Take one a month for vitality and good health."

Shawn's lips twitched as his face flushed a deep red, almost dropping the jar in his embarrassment. It was as if his masculine pride had been dealt a heavy blow.

"Hahaha." Delilah couldn't hold back her laughter upon seeing her husband's expression. Their daughter was too cute. sending her dad a jar of supplements for libido.

After a deep internal sigh, Shawn found an exquisitely carved mahogany box and carefully placed the little jar inside. Even if he didn't need it this was the first gift from his daughter. It had to be treasured. Delilah rolled her eyes at the scene. As Mirabella pondered over Delilah's migraines, she headed upstairs.

Suddenly remembering something important, Delilah quickly called out to her, “Oh, look at me forgetting the big stuff. Almost slipped my mind.”

Mirabella raised an eyebrow, her piercing eyes quietly waiting.

“It's about transferring schools,” Delilah explained. With the school year starting in a few days, they needed to decide on a school within the next day or two.

“Your father and I have shortlisted a few. I'll show you the brochures, and you can pick one.” Saying this, Delilah bent down, opened a drawer in the coffee table, and took out a stack of booklets.

“Take a

a look at Anderson Public School. It's got decent teachers and close enough for you to walk from home.

“There's Auburn High School. It may not have the best college acceptance rates, but it's top-notch for students aiming for art schools.”

“And then there's Maple Academy, a bit on the pricey side, but it's the next best thing after Parkside High School. Your dad and I are leaning towards this one.”

Delilah pulled out the brochure for Maple Academy and flipped through it, handing it to Mirabella, “Normally, the school requires an entrance exam, but your dad and I pulled some strings. You can get in without having to take the test.” Mirabella, who had been waiting to get a word in, glanced at the brochure with a complicated look in her eyes. She wasn't so much reading as she was pondering a question.

## **Chapter 18**

### Chapter 18

Maple Academy was one of those institutions that Mirabella had heard about, one that was undeniably founded on the almighty dollar—a private, elite school if there ever was one. With a staff of seasoned professionals and a rigorous academic hierarchy, only two types of students walked its hallowed halls; genuine geniuses and the filthy rich.

In short, if your pockets were deep enough, you were in. 50-

“Have you already greased the school’s palm?” Mirabella asked, breaking the silence with a stern look that seemed to pin her parents to their seats.

Caught off guard by their daughter’s seriousness, the couple exchanged a glance. “Yes.” “No.”

The first was a firm affirmation from Delilah; the second was a denial from Shawn. Their failure to present a united front led to another silent exchange, this one tinged with mutual disapproval.

Mirabella watched them with a half-smile that somehow made Delilah squirm. Feeling guilty under her daughter’s gaze, Delilah nudged her husband with her foot, signaling him to come up with an explanation.

Taking his wife’s cue. Shawn cleared his throat, straightened up, and with an earnest look on his still-handsome face. said. “If you end up choosing this school your mother and I do indeed have plans to... facilitate your acceptance.” Hearing this, the seriousness on Mirabella’s face softened. “Good that you haven’t paid yet. I’ve already picked my school.”

Though they were far from destitute, Mirabella saw no need for backdoor dealings.

“You’ve chosen a school already? Which one?” Delilah asked eagerly.

Mirabella’s gaze lowered slightly, her reply concise. “Parkside High School.”

Delilah and Shawn were taken aback.

Parkside High School? Had they misheard?

Delilah coughed, seeking clarification. “Sweetie, did you just say... Auburn High School?”

Mirabella set down the school brochure, her head tilting slightly, a smile playing on her lips. “No, Parkside High School”

“But, honey, you’re joking, right? Could you repeat that for me? Which school did you pick?” Despite being charmed by her daughter’s nonchalant demeanor, Delilah still suspected she was hearing things.

Mirabella's eyes sparkled with earnestness. "It's not a joke. Only Parkside High School meets my selection criteria."

Delilah's expression shifted at her daughter's words. "I know Parkside is the best, but it's beyond our reach, sweetie." She was well aware of her daughter's freshman year grades. They were far from stellar.

"Parkside is full of top students from all over. With your grades... even if you get in, it might not be a good thing for you," Shawn added, his expression turning grave at his daughter's ambition. Delilah nodded in agreement. "Exactly, your father's right. We don't expect you to be a top student; we just want you to be happy,

even if it means going to an average university."

After all, they didn't need a fancy diploma for show. Emmitt, Zach, Nick, and Leo made up a quartet of prestigious university alumni, and that was display enough.

So Delilah picked up several other school brochures and intended to hand them to Mirabella. "Take another look at these, Mira. If not, I'll call Maple Academy right now, and we'll settle on that one!"

"Maple is fine, darling. Daddy supports you." Chapter 18

Watching her parents' discouraging response at the mention of Parkside High School, Mirabella pressed her temples with a hint of exasperation. "Just give me a moment," she said, standing up to ascend the staircase.

Chapter 19

No data found.

## **Chapter 19**

Chapter 19

Before long. Mirabella descended the stairs, a letter in hand. Approaching Delilah, she extended the envelope. Delilah's eyes fixed on the letter passed from her daughter's hand. A flicker of confusion crossed her face before she accepted it. "What's this...?"

"It's an acceptance letter for a transfer to Parkside High School" Mirabella replied casually.

As her words settled in the air, Delilah, still in a state of disbelief, was struck dumb when she saw the Parkside High School emblem emblazoned on the front of the envelope. She stood frozen, the letter unopened in her hands.

Watching from the side, his expression hardening. Shawn snatched the acceptance letter from his wife and quickly scanned it. When he looked up at Mirabella again, his face was a mix of shock and bewilderment. It turned out that when Mirabella had insisted she had chosen her school, she hadn't meant from the selection they had offered her. She had made her choice on her own. The date on the acceptance letter was from the previous month.

But... weren't Mirabella's grades a mess? How could Parkside High School accept her?

Snapping back to reality. Delilah scrutinized the acceptance letter thoroughly. Once convinced it was legitimate, she, like her husband, was filled with questions. She turned to Mirabella, about to speak.

But Mirabella's phone buzzed in her pocket. She pulled it out, her eyes darkening at the sight of the unknown number before she raised her head and said to Delilah and Shawn, "I'm gonna take this call" She then stepped out to the balcony, sliding the door closed behind her.

Delilah watched her daughter's retreating figure and murmured, "Shawn, why would our girl have an acceptance letter from Parkside High School? The seal seems legit, doesn't it?"

Shawn narrowed his eyes, pondering for a moment before shaking his head. "I doubt it's a fake."

"But the standards at Parkside High School... can Mira's grades even get her through the door? Didn't Summer mention her previous middle school was the kind you had to pay to get in?" Knowing her daughter's poor academic performance was precisely why Delilah doubted the Parkside High School acceptance letter.

Shawn, thoughtful, simply said, "Don't overthink it. You gotta have faith in your daughter."

Delilah sighed. "It's not that | don't trust her. I'm just afraid she's been duped!"

Shawn looked at her curiously. Delilah couldn't help but express her worry, "Our daughter was raised in a small town, unfamiliar with the harshness of the world. Think about it. Where did this Parkside High School transfer acceptance come from?"

“Isn't it from the school? Where else could it be from?” Shawn grew even more confused by his wife’s anxiety. Delilah scratched her head. “What I mean is, could our daughter have gotten mixed up with the wrong crowd? Remember when we visited her old town and asked her teacher about her? Do you remember the things he said?” At that Shawn’s brows furrowed slightly, and he glanced toward his daughter, who was now standing on the balcony, talking on the phone. She was casually resting her arm on the railing, fingertips tapping rhythmically. The sliding door muffled her voice, making it impossible to discern her conversation. However, she soon hung up and turned around. Her deep eyes met Shawn’s gaze, and she nonchalantly raised an eyebrow as if she knew someone had been watching her.

Achill ran down Shawn's spine.

## **Chapter 20**

### Chapter 20

Mirabella breezed back into the living room, not waiting for Delilah and Shawn to speak up before asking, “Mom, what's our full address? A friend of mine wants to send me something.”

As she spoke, her fingers were already poised over her phone, ready to take down the details.

Delilah rattled off the address, and after she finished, she paused, then asked in a hushed tone, “A friend of yours? Someone you met while staying at Summer’s grandma’s place?”

Mirabella was busy texting and briefly hesitated upon hearing Delilah’s question. She glanced up, nonchalantly grunted an “Mhm,” and continued with her texting.

Sensing Delilah’s eagerness to probe further, Shawn gently tugged at her arm and shook his head, silently advising restraint. Their daughter had just returned home. It was perhaps best not to pry too much so soon.

After sending off her message, Mirabella pocketed her phone and turned her full attention back to Delilah. “Did you have a question for me?” she inquired.

Delilah hesitated, a faint smile tugging at her lips. She shook her head and said, “No, it’s nothing.”

Then her eyes caught sight of the Parkside High School transfer acceptance letter, and after a few seconds of contemplation, she spoke up. “I almost forgot. Summer goes to Parkside High, too. I'll call her and ask her to look out for you a bit. You two might have been mixed up at birth, but she’s got a

gentle nature. I'm sure you'll get along." Despite Summer's somewhat unpleasant demeanor the previous night, she had studied in Parkside for a while and would be a good ally for Mirabella in unfamiliar territory.

Remembering her first encounter with Summer, Mirabella's lips curled into a knowing smile as she simply responded with a noncommittal "Oh."

"Right, Summer's on that reality show now... What's it called?" Delilah slapped her forehead, trying to jog her memory. "Superstar Camp," Shawn chimed in helpfully.

"That's it, Superstar Camp. Have you seen it, Mira? It's all the rage with the young folks," Delilah said, presuming it would be right up her daughter's alley.

Mirabella, disinterested, shook her head. "Never watched it."

Delilah, who had been about to suggest voting for Summer on the show, instead changed tack. "Oh, you don't watch that stuff, huh?"

"Nope, it's a waste of time." Mirabella replied languidly, adding after a beat, "Gets in the way of studying." Delilah's smile faltered, and she found herself momentarily at a loss for words..

Changing the subject, Mirabella inquired. "So, do my brothers not live here anymore?"

Delilah nodded. "They've all got their own lives and moved out some time ago."

After a brief pause, perhaps sensing potential confusion, Delilah added, "Your return was quite sudden. Only Emmitt is here. Zach, Nick and Leo are out of town. They'll come visit once they're less busy."

At the mention of them having their own lives, Mirabella's eyebrows arched in curiosity. She deliberately asked. "They all have jobs?"

Delilah blinked, not quite understanding the intent behind her daughter's pointed question, but she nodded affirmatively nonetheless.

Satisfied with the response, Mirabella didn't press further. Instead, she said sweetly. "I'm heading back to my room."

Once in her room, Mirabella's eyes landed on the brand-new laptop resting atop her desk. She pondered for a few seconds before walking over and booting it up. The desktop was pristine, devoid of any clutter or additional software.

Chapter 20 She opened a web browser and quickly typed out a string of words on the keyboard, hitting the 'Enter' key with purpose.