

The Double 131

Chapter 131

Shawn swallowed the last bite of his breakfast sandwich, with a furrow forming in his brow as he mulled over Mirabella's question. "I do know of a place that sells herbs in bulk. Is that what you're looking for?"

Mirabella nodded.

His curiosity was aroused. Shawn couldn't help but probe further, "What's got you suddenly interested in a herbal market?"

Sipping her oatmeal with a calm that belied her father's growing interest, Mirabella answered, "I need to stock up on some herbs. They're useful."

Shawn, noting his daughter's terse response, pondered for a moment before letting the subject drop. "Remember, the credit card I gave you has plenty of funds. Don't be shy about using it."

A wry smile flickered across Mirabella's lips as she acknowledged with a noncommittal hum, "I know."

Watching his daughter, who seemed to have let his advice go in one ear and out the other. Shawn felt a little wistful. Back when Summer was part of the household, she would concoct all sorts of reasons to ask for money. Though financially comfortable, Shawn and his wife didn't want to spoil her into entitlement. They had always controlled her allowance and kept the family's wealth under wraps.

Ironically, their well-intentioned discretion had been twisted into a narrative of neglect by the Gilbert family's gossipmongers. It became the excuse Summer used to leave without a second thought, returning to the lavish lifestyle of her wealthy biological parents. The irony was not lost on Shawn.

Now, observing his own daughter, he couldn't help but notice the stark contrast. Despite a life of hardships, Mirabella, now back home, had yet to splurge or even touch the money they offered her. She lived as though they were still scrimping by, cautious with every penny.

This duality filled Shawn with both pride and heartache. Their smart and sweet little girl must have endured so much to become who she was now. He and his wife had resolved to fulfill her every wish, to compensate for the years of absence and emotional debt.

Still, the thought of the untouched black credit card he had given her elicited from Shawn an involuntary sigh.

Mirabella, catching the unexpected exhalation, glanced at her father with a hint of concern. "What's wrong?"

In response, Shawn heaved another heavy sigh, gazing back at her with a melancholic yearning, wordlessly embodying the picture of dejection.

The moment Mirabella set foot on school grounds, she was summoned to the office for what

felt like the umpteenth time this semester. The classmate who relayed the message discreetly warned her that Ms. Annette was in a foul mood and advised caution to avoid any potential

blowups.

With a thankful smile to her informant, Mirabella made her way to the office. As soon as she entered, she was met with the sight of Annette's decidedly stormy expression. Touching her nose in confusion, Mirabella wondered if her recent language test had gone that poorly.

Approaching with a posture of obedience, Mirabella greeted her teacher, "Ms. Annette, you wanted to see me?"

Annette, staring at Mirabella, seemed to struggle with a complex mix of emotions before finally speaking up, "Mirabella, do you have any issues with me?"

Mirabella's lips twitched. She was unsure how to respond.

“The results from the recent exams are mostly in. Your performance in all subjects is quite remarkable, but your language’s score...”

Annette paused. Her frustration was palpable as she recalled the moment she laid eyes on Mirabella’s test paper. It filled with elegant handwriting that was a pleasure to the eye, but the total score was... a source of profound disappointment.

Chapter 132

Mirabella could sense Annette’s frustration mounting. With a silent sigh, Mirabella realized that the grim truth of failing was now an undeniable fact.

Annette took a deep, steadying breath before continuing her rant, “You only got a 92? How could you get just 92?!”

The passing threshold was 92 out of 150 points.

Annette had every reason to suspect that her student was deliberately challenging her

literature class. Why else would Mirabella land precisely on the pass mark?

Actually, those extra couple of points were actually a token of generosity from another teacher, who was charmed by the elegance of Mirabella’s handwriting.

Upon hearing Annette’s words, Mirabella looked up in surprise. “Huh? I passed? Really?”

Sensing Mirabella’s unexpected delight, as if she found the whole situation rather satisfactory. Annette felt her blood pressure spiking on the spot.

“Miss Mirabella, if you have any issues with my teaching methods, I’m open to feedback. But this language grade of yours, it’s simply unacceptable,” Annette gritted out through clenched teeth.

With all other subjects aced, language was the only blight on an otherwise perfect record. Annette felt as if she'd lost dignity.

Clearing her throat, Mirabella explained, "Ms. Annette, you've got it all wrong. I don't have any issues. It's just that... let's say, I find some subjects really challenging."

Mirabella excelled in all her subjects, but language, ironically, was her Achilles' heel; it seemed like a deliberate affront to Annette.

Annette simmered before finally saying, "I don't care about your reasons. Your language score must improve. Otherwise, you'll have to come to my house over the weekend for some one-on-one tutoring."

The prospect of ruining such a promising student with a poor language grade was too much for Annette to bear. She resolved to straighten out this skewed talent, even if it meant giving up her weekends.

The mention of tutoring genuinely shocked Mirabella. Regaining her composure, she fibbed seamlessly. "I'm afraid I can't accept your tutoring. My parents signed me up for extra classes in other subjects over the weekend. My schedule is packed."

Back home, Delilah and Shawn sneezed in unison. "Who's talking about us now?!"

Annette felt even more thwarted upon hearing Mirabella's excuse. It was clear to her that Mirabella was favoring every subject but language. Was this not a direct criticism of her teaching?

With a weary sigh, Annette spoke with grave concern, "Regardless, you must improve your language grades or you'll struggle on the exam."

"Yeah, I got it, Ms. Annette," Mirabella replied briskly, eager to avoid further discussions about tutoring.

Annette gave her another look, feeling drained, and then waved her hand dismissively. "Go back to class,"

Mirabella nodded and was about to leave when she added, "Are the monthly exam results out today?"

Annette had returned to her desk. "No, they'll be posted next Monday. We haven't finalized the overall rankings yet."

"Oh," Mirabella touched her nose thoughtfully, asked no further, and turned to leave the office.

The incident in the office regarding Mirabella's language grades might have been a minor episode, but with her back-to-back national first-place victories at the BrainSpark Nationals, her popularity at school was soaring. Consequently, everyone was keenly interested in her monthly exam performance.

Even though the overall results were not yet released, word of her poor language score spread like wildfire across the senior classes, stirring up a buzz of speculation and gossip.

Chapter 133

"Looks like little Miss Perfect from The Advanced Class is gonna eat humble pie this time. Flunked English. Can ya believe it? I'm starting to think she got in through the back door."

"Failed English? How on Earth did she snag first place at the BrainSpark Nationals? Color me curious!"

"Maybe she bombed the test because she got stuck in the back of the exam hall, with no brainiacs around to crib off. Seems like we're finally seeing her true performance."

"Hit the nail on the head, buddy. She sat in the most unique position. Looks like the teachers knew what they were doing by placing her there."

"I was all geared up to see if Mirabella would top the year again, but with those English marks... No amount of acing other subjects is gonna save her now."

“You really think she can ace anything after bombing English? Dream on, I’m not buying it.”

Within the chat groups, such discussions were more or less the norm. This held true e even for Mirabella’s own class. Needless to say, she was part of these groups, but she had silenced all notifications, rendering her oblivious to all this group chatter. Even if she had seen these messages, she wouldn’t have paid much heed.

After school, Mirabella headed out to explore the herbal market her dad had mentioned that morning. She’d barely left the school gates when a figure suddenly blocked her way.

“Well, well, if it isn’t our little scaredy–cat. Ignored my texts last night, did ya?” Aiden stood there. His chin was lifted arrogantly, flanked by three lanky teens with smirks mirroring his

own.

Mirabella’s gaze was fixed on Aiden, and her expression remained icy. Aiden, unnerved by her stare, quickly recovered his bravado. “L..”

“Beat it before I lose my temper,” Mirabella cut him off, her voice dripped with impatience.

The boys surrounding Aiden postured threateningly. “You think you can tell us to beat it?”

“If we weren’t raised to not hit girls, you’d be picking up your teeth off the ground right now for that attitude!”

“Mind your words!” Aiden, seeing his buddies puff up, crossed his arms with a smirk, enjoying the scene.

Summer had just stepped out of the school when she spotted Mirabella cornered by a group of guys. From her vantage point, she couldn’t see Aiden’s face and didn’t realize he was part of the group.

Madeline, walking alongside Summer, caught sight of the scene and couldn't help but raise an eyebrow in anticipation. "Looks like your stepsister's in a bit of trouble, huh?"

Aiden's friends had the look of troublemakers. It was obvious that they were not good guys.

Summer replied with a nonchalant air. "I'm not close to her. Her problems are none of my business."

"Wow, Mirabella's only been back a short while and she's already got guys from other schools on her case? What do they say – karma's only a bitch if you are?" Madeline chuckled maliciously.

Summer's lips twitched, and she turned away. "Let's go. It's none of our business."

Chapter 134

Mirabella eyed the posers in front of her with a bored flick of her head. She suddenly stretched out her hand, using one finger beckoning Aiden with a curl. "You, come here."

Aiden, who was called out, felt a chill. He remembered how his wrist was nearly dislocated last time at the clinic under her grip. Instinctively, he took a step back.

"Chicken" Mirabella spat out dryly.

Before Aiden could even grasp what was happening, Mirabella had already briskly walked over and grabbed his ear with a firm twist. "You picked such bad habits so young, huh? Skipping school ganging up on classmates, bullying the weak? Is this how the Gilbert family raises its kids?"

Mirabella's grip was anything but gentle. Aiden felt like his ear was about to be torn off. His body shivered in pain, completely robbed of his earlier bravado. "Ouch, ouch, ouch, damn it, let go!" Aiden yelped.

His plea was useless and, in desperation, he barked at his friends. "Get this crazy chick off me. now!"

The other boys were stunned, snapping back to reality. They moved to pull Mirabella's hand away but halted as they met her stone-cold, serious face, freezing in place with a sudden unwillingness to intervene.

Mirabella smirked, pulling Aiden closer by his ear, and then smacked the back of his head hard with her left hand. "Always acting tough, aren't you?"

Aiden's head buzzed, and he was stunned, instinctively covering his head with his hands and not daring to fight back.

Mirabella's lips curled into a sneer, "Since your parents didn't teach you how to behave. I guess it falls to me today." After saying that, she landed several more unforgiving slaps.

Aiden, never having been hit before, had his ear throbbing and head spinning. His usual cocky rich kid facade crumbled. "Stop, I'm sorry, okay? Isn't that enough?"

Mirabella halted her assault, narrowing her eyes at him. "What did you do wrong?"

Aiden glanced at her warily, swallowing his pride, and mumbled, "I shouldn't have come looking for trouble with you, nor should I have acted tough in front of you."

If only he had known this timid mouse had turned so fierce, he would never have dared to bother her.

Mirabella let out a soft snort. Her gaze was filled with disdain. "It seems you're not just a chicken, but also dumb."

At her words, Aiden's temper flared, and he tried to lift his head to retort, but, with his ear still in her grasp, he was forced to keep bent over, shouting, "I am not dumb!"

"If you weren't dumb, would you skip class with a bunch of losers to throw your weight around?"

“If you weren’t dumb, would you let yourself get hit without throwing a punch back?”

“If you weren’t dumb, could you do nothing besides bullying others like some spoiled brat?”

Aiden’s face turned beet red, but he found no words to counter.

“You should be glad you’re not my brother,” Mirabella scoffed, finally releasing his ear. If she had a brother like him, she’d have had him straightened out long ago.

Shaking her head, Mirabella pulled out a wet wipe from her bag and casually cleaned each of her fingers. Then she turned back to Aiden, who seemed punch-drunk. Her voice was icy, “Don’t let me see you again, because if I do, it’s going to be a hit every time.”

With that said, Mirabella walked away, leaving Aiden behind to nurse his wounds and his pride.

Chapter 135

Aiden snapped back to reality. His gaze was fixed on Mirabella’s retreating figure. He stood there, dumbstruck a tumult of resentment and anger churning within him.

He despised the fact that this once-timid girl he used to bully not only had the audacity to stand up to him but had actually hit him. What infuriated him more was her declaration that she was not his sister and didn’t want to see him again.

The more Aiden thought about it, the more he felt like a knot was tightening in his chest. “Who the hell wants to be your brother? Keep dreaming! You’re off your rocker!”

“Bro, you okay? That chick was nuts. We didn’t step in to help you because we were afraid she’d go even more ballistic on you if we did,” one of the boys said as they gathered around Aiden. Their faces were a mix of concern and embarrassment.

Aiden's face was a mask of irritation as he regarded his usual gang of truants and troublemakers, who were better at bullying than anything else. Suddenly, the words spoken by Mirabella who had just scolded him for being foolish echoed in his ears.

A sudden wave of annoyance washed over him. Without a word, he turned on his heel and left.

The boys exchanged confused glances. Had Aiden really been knocked senseless by the confrontation? As if by unspoken consensus, they all turned to look at the grand and historic entrance of Parkside High School not too far away. They arrived at a collective understanding. Clearly, whatever Parkside High School was doing, it was working. Their students were a force to be reckoned with, and not to be messed with.

Just as Summer settled into the car, with her purse still in her hand, the driver's surprised voice reached her. "Miss, isn't that Mr. Aiden over there?"

At his words, Summer looked up and out the car window, spotting Aiden's unmistakable face in the distance. What was that fool doing here?

Her attention was quickly drawn to the boys trailing behind him. Weren't they the ones who had just been harassing Mirabella?

Narrowing her eyes, Summer noticed they were all wearing the same school uniform. Were they Aiden's classmates? Had Aiden led his gang to trouble Mirabella?

After a moment's thought, Summer instructed the driver, "Go and bring Aiden here."

Shortly after, Aiden entered the car, with one hand over his ear, and his face in a storm of "You saw everything just now?"

of fury.

Summer raised an eyebrow but didn't answer his question. Instead, she asked, "What brings you to Parkside High School?"

Scratching his head and turning his gaze out the window, Aiden retorted, “None of your

business!”

Summer seemed unfazed by his attitude, and her tone was steady. “I’m your sister. If I don’t look out for you, who will?”

“Heh, what a joke.” Aiden scoffed. Then, turning back to face Summer with a frosty look, he warned. “Don’t you dare tell anyone about today, or you’ll regret it!”

Summer took a deep breath. “Aiden, you’re fifteen. Can you try to act a little more mature?” Besides, she didn’t even know he was involved in the incident with Mirabella until now, and frankly, she couldn’t care less.

“A guy who cheats in competitions talking to me about maturity is pretty funny. Don’t you think?” Aiden sneered, pausing before adding, “Oh right, I almost forgot. You’re on your way to get some answers from someone now, aren’t you?”

At his words, Summer’s expression chilled instantly, and her eyes lost any trace of warmth as she looked at him. “Aiden, you’re really not just ordinarily dense.”

Chapter 136

Facing Summer’s sneer, Aiden just rolled his eyes and impatiently said to the driver ahead, “Just drive.”

The driver cautiously peered into the rearview mirror and as he started the car, he inquired, “Miss, shall we head to the Education Association first or take Mr. Alden home?”

Summer’s expression remained sour. She glanced at her wristwatch and frowned. “Drop me off at the association first, then take him home. I’ll grab an Uber back later.”

“Sure thing,” the driver complied.

Summer cast a look at Aiden who sat beside her, stubbornly covering his ears with his hands. and she massaged her temples in irritation before turning to gaze blankly out the window.

In about twenty minutes, they arrived at the Education Association building. Summer smoothed her hair and adjusted her outfit. A crisp and proper dress had replaced her school uniform before she left school.

After checking her appearance and ensuring nothing was amiss, she donned a face mask and got out of the car.

Once the driver saw Summer enter the lobby, he restarted the vehicle, preparing to head back. to the Gilbert family residence. Aiden, who had been silent and stone-faced the entire ride. suddenly looked up at the driver and said, “Never mind, find a spot to park. We’ll wait for her.”

He muttered under his breath, “It’s just grabbing some documents. Won’t take too long.”

Surprise flickered in the driver’s eyes. The siblings were known for not getting along and had just had a row. Under normal circumstances, Aiden’s waiting for Summer would be out of the question.

Well, kids at that age often rebel, and their fights sometimes are nothing more than a bid for attention. Perhaps that was the case with Aiden tough on the outside, but soft on the inside.

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Soon, the driver found a temporary parking spot nearby and after a moment of thought, he texted Summer to let her know they would be waiting downstairs.”

Fifteen minutes later, Summer emerged carrying a paper bag. The driver, keeping an eye on the lobby, quickly drove over to her.

Summer got in, tossed the paper bag onto the seat, and removed her mask, looking quite pleased as if the trip to the association had dissolved all her earlier displeasure.

Aiden glanced at her. Then his gaze fell on the paper bag. His fingers twitched, reaching for it to see what was inside, but Summer snatched it back promptly. "Don't touch my stuff," she said coldly.

Aiden huffed, "Whatever, as if I care. It's just some crib notes, right?"

Summer shook her head, disappointment evident in her eyes. Not wanting to spoil her mood further, she didn't bother explaining and simply put in her earbuds.

Meanwhile, after dealing with Aiden, Mirabella headed straight for the herbal market. But she got there a bit late, many of the shops had already closed, and those still open didn't pay her much mind. After all, she was just a young girl in a school uniform.

Mirabella didn't mind, though. She browsed a few stores and realized they only had common herbs, nothing of the special or rare varieties she needed.

She stepped out of another shop, and disappointment was clearly etched on Mirabella's face.

Chapter 137

In a bustling marketplace that seemed to stretch endlessly in every direction, Mirabella felt the stirrings of frustration. How could it be that, amidst this sea of commerce, she couldn't find the herbs she desperately needed? It defied logic.

Rubbing her temples as if to summon patience, she continued her trek deeper into the market's heart. That was when her gaze landed on a quaint little shop named Nature's Apothecary, its old-world charm set it apart from the modern storefronts that lined the street, beckoning her with an aura of timelessness.

With a gentle push, Mirabella entered the shop and was immediately embraced by a subtle fragrance of sandalwood that wafted through the air. It was a refreshing change from the overpowering scents that

usually filled the market stalls. This aroma was neither cloying nor harsh; it had a quality distinctly superior to the common incense she was accustomed to.

She surveyed the interior, taking in the simple yet tasteful displays of carved wooden artifacts that adorned the windows and counters. The back wall was lined with small wooden cubbies, each labeled with the name of an herb. A beaded curtain led to a back room, suggesting a

private space beyond.

As she was about to inquire about the herbs, the curtain was swept aside, and a middle-aged man stepped out. He paused at the sight of Mirabella. His eyes registered mild surprise before he quickly closed a wooden door behind him and approached her with a polite tone.

"I apologize, but the shop is about to close," he said. His voice was tinged with the subtle hint of sending her away.

Unfazed, Mirabella got straight to the point: "Do you have Greatheart Ginseng, Cureroot, Ember Moss, and Dragonbone Stone in stock?"

The man's eyes widened with surprise upon hearing her request. These were rare and costly herbs, known for their soothing and restorative properties. They were not commonly used together, as the blending of their effects required precision, and a miscalculation could produce significant adverse reactions. Despite their rarity, there were few who sought to purchase them.

The man, noting Mirabella's determined demeanor, realized she was a serious buyer. "We have all but the Greatheart Ginseng. How much do you need?"

A bit disappointed but still encouraged, Mirabella responded, "300 grams each of Cureroot and Ember Moss, and 250 grams of Dragonbone Stone."

The man nodded, "We have those amounts." After punching some numbers into the register, he informed her. "The total comes to three hundred and twenty thousand."

The price seemed fair. Mirabella pulled out her smartphone and asked, “Do you take online bank transfers?”

“Certainly,” the man replied, handing her a card with the shop’s bank account details printed on

1. it.

Mirabella glanced at the card for no more than a moment before completing the transfer in under two minutes. When the man’s phone pinged with the confirmation, he looked up in astonishment. She had memorized the account number with just a brief look. That was an impressively long string of digits!

Noticing the shopkeeper’s stunned expression, Mirabella raised an eyebrow. “Is there a problem?”

Snapping back to reality, the man quickly assured her, “No, no issue. I’ll get your herbs right. away.”

While he busied himself with her order, Mirabella casually inquired, “By the way, do where I might find Indian Old Sandalwood?”

you know

The man paused mid-task, as the question caught him off guard. Clearly, this young woman’s knowledge of herbs and her surprising request indicated she was no novice in these matters.

Chapter 138

If the initial concoction was meant to fine-tune the body’s functions, then the addition of aged sandalwood’s soothing qualities would perfectly enhance the characteristics of each ingredient, minimizing any side effects. However, this approach was rather old school. Its complexity required a pharmacist’s keen judgment and precise blending, and since the recipes and methods had been lost to time, hardly anyone practiced it anymore.

The man only knew of it because his family had been steeped in the traditions of alternative medicine for generations. It seemed that this young lady must have a real sage of medicine in her family.

The man composed himself and spoke with added politeness, "I have a friend who deals in spices. He's got sandalwood, and his shop isn't too far from here. Let me give you his card. You might find what you need there."

Had it not been for the presence of someone in the back room, he would have been tempted to escort the young lady himself. Competent herbal specialists were hard to come by, let alone those versed in ancient remedies.

Quickly, the middle-aged man packaged the herbs and found the business card, handing both to Mirabella.

"Thanks a bunch, mister," said Mirabella, taking the items and getting ready to leave.

As she headed for the door, the man hesitated, and then called out to her, "You know, I don't have Greatheart Ginseng, but I do have some other gingsengs..."

Mirabella stopped in her tracks, turning slightly, and said in a calm voice, "No need. Although the efficacy might not be much different, precision is key in medicine. A slight difference could lead to a huge discrepancy."

After saying that, she pushed the door open and left.

The middle-aged man stood there, stunned. His mind was a whirl until an older man emerged from the back room, snapping him back to reality. "Ethan, what are you daydreaming about? Lock the front door, will you?" the elder chided.

Ethan replied as he moved to the door, "Sir, there was a young lady here to buy herbs, and her prescription was quite unique."

The older man, disinterested, pulled out a worn book from a drawer and asked casually, "Oh? What did she get?"

Ethan recounted the herbs Mirabella had requested and added, "I told her we were out of Greatheart Ginseng. She didn't want another batch either and then asked about aged sandalwood..."

The old man's expression showed a flicker of surprise, but he glanced towards the back room. and cut Ethan off, "Enough, we'll talk later." Then, he disappeared into the back room with his

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belongings. Ethan hummed in acknowledgment, locked the door, and followed him.

Inside, the scent of sandalwood was more potent than outside, clearly emanating from within these walls.

James lounged in a mahogany chair, idly toying with the incense utensils on a small table beside him, appearing nonchalant yet somehow too pale.

"James, with the state you're in, besides medicating and taking it slow, I'm afraid I've got no other tricks up my sleeve," the elder who had just walked in spoke to him.

Standing next to James, Wyatt, with a hint of despondency, inquired. "But the medicine doesn't seem as effective anymore. Isn't there another way to stem this?"

The elder gave a wry smile, shaking his head, and then handed over the old book to Wyatt. "This tome is handed down from the previous generation. It holds some potential solutions, but even if I am able to concoct the remedy, there's no saying how effective it would be or if it might be rejected by James' condition..."

Chapter 139

After decades of delving into medical theories, if the old man could concoct the remedy, he would have done it by now, instead of sitting there, clutching an ancient tome, clueless on how to proceed.

The elder sighed before continuing. "You might want to show this book to folks over at the Pharmacists' Guild. Maybe they'll get something out of it."

Wyatt's eyes settled on the book the old man was offering. Just as he was about to reach for it. James spoke up slowly. "A gentleman does not covet what another cherishes. Since this is a heirloom of your ancestors, it wouldn't be right for me to borrow it."

Wyatt felt a mix of frustration and urgency. "But what about the condition you have..."

James raised his hand to stop him, calm and composed. "Didn't Nikolai say there's a temporary solution? That will do for now.

"If only we could find a descendant from the fabled Massolio Clan, James' predicament might easily be resolved." Nikolai sighed and paused. Then he added, "However... no one from that clan has ever surfaced, so their very existence remains a mystery."

Wyatt, recalling the information he had previously gathered, clenched his fists and said with determination, "No matter what it takes, even if I have to dig three feet into the ground, I will find them."

Mirabella strolled through the herbal market. Her luck was not too bad, for she managed to find the last ingredient she needed. With her shopping list complete, she pulled out the business card the middle-aged man had given her earlier and headed toward the spice shop listed on it.

The sandalwood she needed was rare and precious, causing prices to skyrocket, and counterfeits were rampant. When Mirabella arrived at the spice shop, the owner tried to pass off inferior goods from

another region, thinking she was just a naive young lady. But once she exposed his ruse, he quickly realized he was dealing with a connoisseur and reluctantly brought out the genuine article. Although the quality of the sandalwood was somewhat disappointing, it would suffice for her purposes. Without wasting words or asking for special packaging, she paid and left.

Outside, the sky had darkened completely. Delilah had called twice already, so Mirabella hailed a cab and headed home. When she arrived, it was nearly eight o'clock.

Delilah, seeing her daughter carrying several bags, felt a surge of pride and began to help her, saying, "It's good for a girl to go out. Maybe shop for some clothes or jewelry..." However, her words came to an abrupt halt when she inadvertently glimpsed a piece of wood in one of the bags.

Mirabella, slipping into her house slippers, turned to see her mother's stunned face and couldn't help but call out, "Mom?"

Delilah looked up, dramatically pulling the bag open, and said with a pained expression, "Please don't tell me you went shopping and brought home a rotten piece of wood."

Other daughters brought home dresses or Jewelry, or at the very least, some treats. But hers? She brought home a piece of wood?

Was that normal?

Mirabella earnestly corrected her, "It's sandalwood." The expensive kind at that.

Delilah didn't care what kind of wood it was. All she knew was that her beautiful, cute, and clever daughter's image was completely ruined by this wretched log.

Refusing to believe it, Delilah opened the other two bags and immediately her expression grew even more despondent. One lousy piece of wood was bad enough, but the other bags were filled with equally strange items.

Delilah shook her head, convinced she had opened them the wrong way.

Chapter 140

The sweet and adorable daughter Delilah had always imagined seemed to be just that – an imagination.

With a wistful sigh, Delilah placed several shopping bags onto the table and playfully said, “Oh sweetheart, could you maybe be just a tad cuter for your mom?” Finishing her sentence, she winked exaggeratedly and flashed a silly peace sign at Mirabella.

Mirabella’s gaze flitted over Delilah’s peace sign. Her brow furrowed for a moment, and then she conveniently ignored her mother’s words and asked, “Mom, got anything to eat?” Delilah gave another sigh, “Of course, I saved some for you. Come and eat before it gets cold.” Delilah and Shawn had already had their dinner, and Zach was out at a business dinner. expected to return late. So now, at the dining table, it was just Mirabella, slowly savoring her meal.

After dinner, Mirabella picked up the shopping bags from the table and had just reached the foot of the stairs when she suddenly turned back to Delilah, who was lounging on the sofa watching a TV show. “Mom, do we have any spare rooms or maybe a storage space available?”

up.”

Delilah looked up. “Well, there is a storage room downstairs but it’s pretty cluttered. What do you need it for?”

“It’s not for storage, really. I need some space to work on crafts, something separate,” Mirabella replied in her usual unhurried manner.

“Oh, I see...” Delilah pondered for a moment and then suggested, “You know, Nick’s room is empty. You could use that room. It’s just next to yours on the left.”

There was a brief silence before Mirabella asked, “Would that be alright?”

Delilah chuckled and shook her head. "Of course, it's fine. Nick's settled abroad and hardly comes home. It's just sitting empty."

Mirabella nodded and ascended the stairs.

Once she was gone, Delilah rubbed her chin in thought and turned to her husband. "Shawn, don't you think our current house is getting a bit cramped?"

Pausing, she continued, "Look, we don't even have a private space for our daughter. Sure, Nick's living overseas, but knowing our girl, she'll feel uncomfortable using his room indefinitely."

Shawn set down the remote control and thought it over, finding Delilah's point valid. "How about we move to Sunnydale Heights? The neighborhood's nicer, and the houses are bigger. There's more room, and it's closer to our daughter's school. Plus, if she wants to have friends over, we won't have to worry about not having enough space for them to stay."

"That's right. I have completely forgotten about the villa in Sunnydale Heights," Delilah slapped her forehead. "I'll get in touch with an interior designer tomorrow to see what renovations we need and what furniture we should get. We'll make it a priority to move in quickly and surprise our girl."

True to her nature, Delilah was all about swift action. After finishing her conversation with Shawn, she grabbed her phone and started scrolling for the designer's number, promptly making a call to set up a meeting for the next day.

Having arranged the appointment, Delilah put her phone down and was suddenly struck by a tinge of melancholy. She glanced around the room and sighed, "It's hard to leave a place you've lived in for

over twenty years."

Shawn raised an eyebrow and patted her shoulder. "It's for our daughter."

The sentiment of leaving a home of more than two decades quickly faded when compared to their daughter, who had faced many challenges growing up.

“You’re right. We might be used to this old house, but our daughter deserves the best,” Delilah paused, a flicker of regret in her eyes. “I wish we had thought to move before she came back.” Perhaps then, there wouldn’t have been any misunderstandings about debts in the family.