

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

#Chapter 21 - Read The Double (or More ?) Life of The Fake Heiress Chapter 21

Chapter 21

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In no time at all, the computer's main screen popped up with a verification box. Mirabella deftly entered a few words and cleared the verification, and

only then did she gain access to the website's homepage. But before she could even make out the details of the page, the screen dimmed once more. A user login dialog appeared.

Mirabella watched the screen expressionlessly, typing in her username and password while shaking her head in disbelief. What a piece of work this

site was, always with the dramatics. It was going to crash and burn one of these days.

Acchime sounded swiftly, and she logged in successfully, greeted by a bright, bold line of text at the top of the

homepage,

[The Mirror. If you can dream it, we can sell it.]

Mirabella's lips twitched violently at the slogan.

She casually scrolled through, finding nothing particularly fresh or challenging, and was about to close the site in boredom. Just then, her account avatar started flashing. Someone was looking for her.

Raising an eyebrow, Mirabella clicked on the avatar, and a message popped up. A little green dot beneath the sender's icon indicated they were

online.

CoolAutumnBreeze: Holy smokes, kiddo, you've finally shown up!

CoolAutumnBreeze: Where in the world have you been all year? Why haven't you been online? CoolAutumnBreeze: Kiddo, you there? Why the silence?

Mirabella stared at the computer for a long while before sluggishly typing a symbol

BaldyBabe

The nickname was a random choice she made when registering, and since she couldn't be bothered to come up with something else, she never changed it. To her annoyance, the site didn't offer a rename option, so she was stuck with this ridiculous moniker.

CoolAutumnBreeze: Dude, where have you been? It's been a year without a trace of you.

Mirabella's fingertips paused, weighing her response, and after a moment-

BaldyBabe: Ever had a time-travel experience, darling?

Across the computer, Riley was sipping water when he read the message on the screen and nearly spat it out. CoolAutumnBreeze: Oh man, you haven't been hacked, have you? You're asking such a daft question! BaldyBabe: ...Scram!

The familiar irate response, the same old Mirabella.

CoolAutumnBreeze: Ha, just kidding.

BaldyBabe: Logging off.

CoolAutumnBreeze: Wait up, buddy, don't go. | need to ask about someone.

BaldyBabe: Who?

CoolAutumnBreeze: Cian,

Mirabella's expression twisted oddly at the name, and she stayed silent, not responding right away. After a long wait, Riley sent another message: Dude, are you still there?

ht away

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Mirabella's gaze lowered slightly, her fingers moved, and she replied: Don't know him. But why are you asking about this guy?

CoolAutumnBreeze: Just helping a friend. They're looking to buy some meds from him. Heard he's quite the enigma. At first. I thought you might

know him. BaldyBabe: | don't know him. I'm out.

CoolAutumnBreeze: Alright then. If it's cool with you, bro, can you leave me a contact? We've known each other for nearly three years. BaldyBabe: Not cool. Bye.

Mirabella promptly shut down her computer.

Baldu

Riley watched his friend BaldyBabe's' avatar go dark and scratched his head in frustration. The bald monk was still as aloof and heartless as ever! He closed the website and pondered for a few seconds before grabbing his phone from the table and sending out a text

message.

Since Mirabella returned to the Davis household, aside from her daily morning jogs, she spent most of her time

indoors. Delilah had tried to coax her out several times, only to be turned down with the excuse that she had to study. This was really making Delilah

quite vexed.

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On Sunday, Mirabella's package arrived. It wasn't particularly large, yet it was surprisingly heavy. Shawn, who had mustered the strength of Hercules and enlisted his wife's help, finally managed to heave the box from the doorstep into the living room.

Delilah eyed her husband, puffing and panting, and teased, “Don’t forget to take that supplement Mira sent you, hon.” Shawn’s forehead was a symphony of throbbing veins. Exhausted, he had no desire to speak.

Mirabella descended the staircase just in time to witness the scene. She headed to the kitchen for a glass of water. “Honey, your package is here.” Delilah called out to her.

With a nonchalant hum, Mirabella set down her glass and approached.

“What on earth did your friend send you? It’s so heavy,” Delilah said, her curiosity piqued.

Mirabella’s eyes lowered slightly as she rolled up her sleeves, answering casually, “Oh, just a bunch of knick—knacks.” As she spoke, she bent down and effortlessly lifted the box, her slender frame seeming to harbor boundless strength. “I’m heading upstairs,” she declared, her voice betraying no sign of strain.

Beside her, Shawn, who had struggled so mightily, was flabbergasted. Was his daughter a strongwoman? The box must have weighed at least fifty pounds. How could she lift it with such ease?

Delilah, too, was taken aback. In that instant, her mental image of a delicate and dainty daughter began to crumble.

Mirabella had always been strong and was unaware of the psychological shadows she cast on her parents by merely lifting a box. After a year in her current body, which had initially felt feeble, she had undergone extensive conditioning and training that had left her in the best shape so far. To her, a box weighing forty or fifty pounds was a trifle.

After hauling the box to her room, Mirabella spent the entire afternoon tinkering with its contents, scarcely leaving her sanctuary. Meanwhile, Delilah made several trips to her daughter’s door, contemplating a knock but ultimately deciding against it. It wasn’t until dinner time that Mirabella emerged, a trace of fatigue gracing her delicate features.

Emmitt was present at dinner as well, which surprised Mirabella. Since picking her up from the airport, he had not once returned home. Whether he was simply too busy or reluctant to accept her as his sister, she didn’t know. And frankly, it didn’t matter to her.

At the dinner table, Emmitt's expression was a mix of emotions. "Mirabella, Mom told me you're transferring to Parkside High School?" he asked. She mentioned choosing Parkside High a few days ago, but he thought she was just boasting. Deep down, he had little respect for her, which was why he didn't bother to come by after dropping Summer off at the Gilbert family. Had it not been for several calls from his mother, he might not have returned even today.

You could only imagine his shock upon seeing the acceptance letter from Parkside High School that his mother had shown him.

Mirabella was focused on her meal, and only after a considerable delay did she lift her head to meet Emmitt's gaze with her own clear eyes, replying. "Yeah... | am. I'm going to register tomorrow."

Meeting his sister's pure gaze, Emmitt felt as if something was lodged in his throat, and it took him a moment to murmur. "Then... I'll take you to school tomorrow."

"Oh, there's no need. | can take the bus. You've got your things to do." Mirabella responded, thinking she was being considerate and helpful.

Hearing this, Emmitt's discomfort intensified.

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Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Emmitt felt a pang of shame for his earlier presumptions, so he was all the more insistent on driving her to school.

Mirabella had finished her meal and was about to agree to his offer when he added, "Summer's at Parkside High School too. | promised her I'd drive her on the first day of school. You're not familiar with Parkside, and with Summer there, you'd have..."

Before he could finish, Mirabella cut him off with a cool, "No need, | can manage on my own," the corner of her mouth twisting in self-mockery.

With that she stood up, glanced at Delilah and Shawn, and said, "Dad, Mom, I'm heading upstairs." Without waiting for a response, she walked away.

Soon after, Mirabella's figure vanished at the stairwell.

Snapping back to reality, Emmitt frowned slightly, wondering if she was throwing a temper tantrum because he mentioned driving Summer, too. He looked at his parents and said with a heavy voice, "Has she been like this since she got back?"

And here he was, feeling a bit guilty just moments ago.

Understanding the implication of his question, Delilah instinctively defended her daughter, "Mira's actually got a great personality. But you know she's just returned, and you haven't come to see her for days. That might be the reason she's a bit upset."

Despite feeling somewhat at fault, Emmitt couldn't help but retort, "Even if she's upset, that's no excuse for her attitude. Mom. I know she's just returned, but don't spoil her too much."

Delilah didn't take kindly to her son's words, slapping the table with a bit of ferocity, "Hey, why are you so hard on your sister? What did she ever do to you?"

Emmitt quickly stood up, raising his hands in a placating gesture. "Okay, my bad. I shouldn't have come tonight. I'll leave you to it." The sound of the front door closing echoed moments later.

Delilah glanced at the barely touched dinner, feeling overwhelmed. "Emmitt seemed to get along fine with Mira when he picked her up. Why is he acting up today?"

Shawn reached out, gently patting her shoulder, soothingly saying. "Take it slow. Our daughter just got back. They need time to readjust."

"I always thought Emmitt was the most level-headed. He should've gotten along best with Mira, but now..." Delilah rubbed her temples, feeling the onset of a headache.

The other Davis kids, Zach, Nick and Leo, were wild cards and hadn't come home yet. Who knew what kind of conflicts they'd spark next?

After leaving the neighborhood, Emmitt's mind was racing as he drove. Eventually, he decided to call Summer and arranged to meet her at a nearby diner. Half an hour later.

"Emmitt, why're you calling me out this late? Is something up?" Summer asked as she sat down across from him. After gaining a following from Superstar Camp, she became somewhat of a celebrity and had taken to wearing sunglasses and a mask in public. Now, in the privacy of the booth, she had removed them.

Emmitt poured her a glass of water. "No rush, let's order some food first." He handed her the menu.

Summer casually ordered a steak, sipped her water, and tentatively asked, "Emmitt, are you here because of Mira's school situation?"

She had mentioned helping Mirabella with school on the drive home but hadn't heard a peep from the Davis family since.

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Emmitt rested his hands on the tabletop, peering at Summer as the corners of her lips curved into a bittersweet smile. "I guess you could say that."

Spotting his expression, Summer's face softened with concern. "Haven't settled on a school yet? If that's the case, I'll just give my dad a call right now..." She reached into her purse and pulled out her cell phone.

"No need for calls," Emmitt interjected, "it's not that we haven't chosen a school." Summer's hand, poised to dial paused mid-air as she looked at him, puzzled.

After a slight tug at the corner of his lips and a two-second silence, Emmitt revealed, "She's already picked her school. It's Parkside High School,"

Summer blinked in disbelief as if she hadn't quite heard him right. It took a moment for it to sink in, then with a voice tinged with incredulity and something else, she laughed, "Emmitt, are you talking about Parkside High School? That's my school isn't it?"

Seeing Summer's astonished look, Emmitt knew she was as skeptical as he'd expected. After a pause, he spoke up. "She'll be registering at the school tomorrow. Actually, the reason I asked you out so late is to see if you could keep an eye on her for us."

He paused before adding. "Mira's been raised in a small, out-of-the-way town and hasn't seen much of the world. We're not exactly clear on how her grades are, but they're definitely not Parkside High material. I have no clue how she got her hands on that transfer acceptance letter from Parkside High, but she's adamant about going. So, Summer, I'm really counting on you."

Though Emmitt had reservations about Mirabella, she was family, and he intended to help where he could.

Summer listened intently, her gaze dropping momentarily as she suppressed certain emotions within. It took only a second before she looked back at Emmitt with a sweet smile. "Don't worry, Emmitt. You didn't have to ask—I'll take good care of Mira."

Emmitt had always known Summer to be a sweet girl, and looking at her now, he couldn't help but feel a twinge of regret. If only there hadn't been that baby mix-up.

"But Emmitt, you just mentioned you're unsure where Mira's transfer letter came from?" Summer quickly resumed her questioning with a feigned puzzled look.

Emmitt nodded, "Yeah, Mom and Dad are clueless too."

"I see..." Summer fiddled with her phone's edge, then put on an uncertain expression. "You know, I vaguely remember last month. I think I overheard my dad on the phone with the principal of Parkside High."

At this, Emmitt visibly stiffened. Last month? Wasn't that around the same time as the date on his sister's admission letter? But then it struck him—Mirabella hadn't been raised in the Gilbert family. She'd been left to grow up in a distant town with her grandmother. Considering her rather unprivileged upbringing, would the Gilberts really pull strings to get her into such a prestigious school? He found it hard to believe.

Keenly observing Emmitt's shifting expressions, Summer saw his brow furrow and quickly added, "But you know, a school as demanding as Parkside High might be tough to get into, even with my dad's influence. Maybe I misheard."

With an innocent shrug and a playful stick of her tongue, she looked every bit the harmless girl next door. "Don't sweat it, Emmitt. As long as the transfer letter is legit, it doesn't matter who helped her. We're all just looking out for Mira."

Emmitt's frown deepened at her words.

Summer glanced at Emmitt's silent brooding, a sly smile tugging at her lips, but she said no more.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Emmitt was in a foul mood, all thanks to the drama with Mirabella. Even chatting with Summer became a half-hearted affair.

After polishing off a hearty dinner, Emmitt drove Summer back home without much conversation. As they pulled up to the grand entrance of the Gilbert family estate, Summer unfastened her seatbelt and turned to Emmitt. "Hey, Emmitt why don't you come in for a bit? My dad's been asking for you and told me to invite you over several times."

Emmitt's hand rested on the steering wheel as he cast a nonchalant glance toward the impressive mansion just beyond the car window. He shook his head. "Nah, it's late, and it doesn't feel right. Maybe some other time."

A flash of disappointment flickered in Summer's eyes, but she maintained a genteel smile. "Alright then, Emmitt. Drive safe. I'll see myself in."

She paused as if a thought had just struck her and playfully winked at him. "Oh, and don't you forget about our date tomorrow, Emmitt."

Emmitt blinked, momentarily thrown off.

"You promised to personally take me to school on the first day, remember? Or did you forget?" Summer clasped her chest, feigning heartbreak.

Regaining his composure, Emmitt chuckled and shook his head. "I haven't forgotten." Relieved. Summer beamed. "Good, then. You better head home. I'll hop out now. See you tomorrow!"

With a soft "hm," Emmitt watched Summer push the car door open to step out. But just as she was about to leave. Mirabella crossed his mind, and he called out almost instinctively, "Summer."

She turned back, her expression one of confusion, "Yeah?" Her clear eyes shone with Innocence, and her beautiful face had a soft understanding look to it.

Emmitt smiled wryly, shaking his head again. "It's nothing. I just forgot to ask what time we should head to school. tomorrow." you were about to

Summer let out a relieved sigh, half-joking, "You scared me for a second there. Emmitt. I thought you bail on me for tomorrow." His eyes flickered, denying any such intention. "No, not at all."

subject.

"Alright then, let's make it eight o'clock tomorrow," Summer swiftly changed the subled

"Sure," Emmitt replied.

She waved goodbye and bounded out of the car, heading towards the mansion. Emmitt's gaze lingered on Summer's retreating figure until she was out of sight. He then slowly retracted.

If Mirabella didn't need him to take her to school, there was no reason for him to decline Summer's request, especially since she was like a sister to him. With that thought, any lingering guilt in Emmitt's heart faded away.

Soon after, he started the car's engine and turned, leaving the Gilbert family behind.

As Summer stepped through the door, her mother, Mandy, lounging on the living room sofa, looked up and asked, "Who's keeping you out so late, honey?" Her tone was gentle, devoid of any accusation.

Summer strolled over and began to massage Mandy's shoulders with practiced ease, "Oh, it was just Emmitt. He needed to talk." "Emmitt?" Mandy's brows furrowed at the mention of the name. "That boy from your foster family again?"

Summer knew Mandy looked down on the Davis family and simply hummed in acknowledgment.

"|

"Didn't | tell you to keep your distance from the Davis folks?" Mandy spoke earnestly, "I know you've got a big heart, 1/2

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you get to them.

but those people, especially those so-called brothers of yours, are not the best company. The closer y the more they might try to take advantage of you someday."

Summer's gaze fell slightly, thinking it was Mandy's prejudice and short-sightedness speaking. Mandy would never understand the true potential of the Davis family.

No data found.

Chapter 26

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"Mom, I've got it under control, don't worry, it's all good," Summer said softly, pausing for a brief moment before continuing. "There's something kinda bizarre though. Mom, didn't you tell me that Mirabella's grades were a total mess?"

Mandy's eyes were closed in the bliss of her daughter's massage. She took her time before responding in a faint voice, "Yeah, what about it?"

Summer's hands didn't cease their gentle motions as she prodded cautiously. "It looks like she's about to enroll at Parkside High School."

At that, Mandy's eyelids snapped open, her body turning slightly to cast an incredulous glance at Summer standing behind her. "What did you just say?"

Summer watched the astonishment wash over her mother's face, a hint of skepticism flashing in her eyes. "Emmitt came to me tonight. He mentioned that Mirabella's going to Parkside High School and asked me to keep an eye on her, you know, on the down-low."

With a flicker of curiosity, Summer asked, "Mom, did you and Dad pull some strings or something? How else could she get into Parkside High School?"

"How could we? With her grades, she'd be lucky to get into any regular high school, let alone Parkside. If your father and I had intervened, wouldn't that be hurting the Gilbert family's reputation?" Mandy scoffed lightly.

"So you didn't help her? How did she get into Parkside High School then...?" Summer's face was tinged with curiosity. Mandy's expression darkened, her tone matching her mood, "Are you sure about this?"

Summer nodded confidently. "I'm certain. Emmitt told me himself. He wouldn't lie to me."

Mandy sat up straight, silent for a moment, then reached for the smartphone on the coffee table.

Mirabella was tinkering with a collection of antiquated—looking gadgets when her phone, lying on the bed, began to ring. She paused, glanced at it, then continued working on her nearly finished project, ignoring the call. However, the caller was persistent, and the ringing continued without respite.

Focused on her task, Mirabella remained undisturbed. Soon after, she had carefully bottled the substance extracted from the apparatus and finally removed her gloves at a leisurely pace.

The phone was still ringing. This time, Mirabella didn't ignore it. She walked over to the bed, picked up the phone, and, seeing the caller ID, she hesitated for a moment. With a quick swipe, she answered the call, only to be greeted by Mandy's frantic voice. "I've called you countless times. Why haven't you picked up?"

Mirabella held the phone away from her ear, countering her foster mother's interrogation with a cool query. "Something up?"

On the other end, Mandy grew more irate "what is that.

Rubbing her temples, Mirabella had no patience for the nagging. "If there's nothing important. I'm hanging up." Aware that her foster daughter had grown

increasingly rebellious and unrecognizable over the past year, Mandy cut to the chase.

“I have no idea what you pulled to get a spot at Parkside High School, but I’m telling you now, I don’t want you there. Your presence would be the joke of Parkside, a stain on the Gilbert family’s name.

“Pick any other school in the city, and the Gilbert family can pull some strings to get you in. We’ll even cover the tuition. But on one condition—you never tell anyone you were once a Gilbert.”

At these words, Mirabella’s eyebrows arched with amusement, and she remarked rather earnestly. “Is the Gilbert family the richest in the world or something?”

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Mandy’s face turned a shade of red. “Mirabella, have you lost your marbles?”

With a lazy smirk tugging at her lips, Mirabella stretched out on her bed like a cat in a sunbeam, her striking eyes fixed on the ceiling. Her feathery, light voice floated through the air, “If you’re not the queen of Wall Street, then what gives you the gall to make such a racket here?” With a sigh, Mirabella ended the call.

At the sound of the disconnected line, Mandy shook with rage, hurling her smartphone onto the coffee table with a clatter. It bounced and skidded onto the floor.

Summer, who stood nearby, flinched, a testament to the chilling atmosphere. She quickly bent down to retrieve the fallen device, observing the shattered screen before silently placing it back on the table.

Then, taking a seat next to the fuming Mandy, Summer reached out and gently patted her back. “Mom, simmer down, okay? No need to stoop to Mirabella’s level. She was raised by Grandma and turned out a bit wild, so her words can be... well rough around the edges. Don’t take it to heart. It’s not worth your health.”

Summer had heard every word since Mandy had put the call on speakerphone. To be honest, even Summer was a bit taken aback by Mirabella’s audacious tone. Her voice sounded perfectly normal, but it carried an undercurrent of arrogance that was hard to ignore.

Mandy always cared deeply about appearances, and being confronted in such a manner was bound to get under her skin. After Summer murmured some

soothing words, Mandy's expression finally softened. She looked at her obedient and sensible daughter and, with a touch of relief, stroked her hair. "You're the considerate one."

Mandy was grateful once more, that the mix-up at the hospital had been corrected. If she'd been stuck with a daughter like Mirabella, it would've been the death of her. Taking a deep breath, Mandy recalled the real reason for waiting up that evening. She reached for a petite purse on the table, pulled out a credit card, and handed it to Summer.

"School's about to start, and there's half a million on this card. Take it for now. If it's not enough, just tell me." Summer tried to hand the card back. "Mom, I've got enough money. I haven't even spent what you gave me last time."

Mandy insisted, pushing the card back into her hands. "The Gilberts can't look less than anybody else. And with your training and online popularity soaring, you've got to keep up appearances."

Summer glanced at the card in her hand, then looked up with a smile. "Thanks, Mom."

Meanwhile, after ending the call, Mirabella was preparing to shower and get some sleep. She had just grabbed her pajamas from the dresser when a knock sounded at her door. "Mira, are you up?" came Delilah's voice from the hallway.

Mirabella placed her sleepwear down thoughtfully and walked to the door, opening it to find her mother.

Spotting her daughter's composed but passive attitude, and keeping in mind Emmitt's actions from earlier that evening. Delly gently queried, "Are you cross with Emmitt?"

Mirabella looked puzzled. "Huh?"

Delilah's concern seemed to fade as she realized Mirabella apparently hadn't taken the evening's events to heart. She breathed a sigh of relief but felt a twinge of discomfort as she said, "Sometimes, Emmitt can be a bit oblivious and not consider your feelings. Don't take it personally, okay?"

Now understanding her mother's concern, Mirabella responded with succinct reassurance, "I know, Mom. I'm not upset."

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Her gaze was so sincere that it was impossible to mistake her words for anything but the truth. Such a sensible daughter she had. Delilah couldn't help but silently chew her eldest son out. The boy must've been blind to accuse his sister of having a bad temper

"Ahem, glad you're not upset. Your dad said he'll drive you to school tomorrow. You can sleep in a bit, Delilah said hastily.

"Okay."

"Then get some rest early. Don't stay up too late. I'm heading out." Delilah advised, then turned to leave.

"Mom, wait a sec." Mirabella suddenly called her back, then turned and walked into her room.

In just a moment, Mirabella returned to the doorway, handing Delilah a porcelain jar. "Take one every three days, and within a month, your migraines should clear up."

Delilah, somewhat stunned, took the jar. "This...did this come from a friend of yours?" She remembered her daughter mentioning something similar a few days ago, along with a package that had arrived today.

Mirabella gave a noncommittal hum in response. Holding the jar for some time. Delilah finally smiled and said. "Thank your friend for me. That's very thoughtful."

Although the last remedy Mirabella had given her did work wonders, Delilah didn't quite believe in a complete cure for her migraines. Nonetheless, it was the thought that counted, and she appreciated her daughter's concern.

Mirabella could see the skepticism in Delilah's eyes but just smiled without further explanation. The next morning dawned crisp and clear.

Mirabella descended the stairs dressed casually, her long ponytail swishing and a modest canvas backpack slung her shoulder. Though her look was simple, her striking, sculpted features lent her an effortlessly cool air.

Delilah watched her daughter with a sense of pride, thinking that while some people needed clothes to look good. Mirabella made the clothes look good. Whatever Mirabella wore, she wore with style.

But then- "Mira, why aren't y

you wearing any of the clothes | bought you? Don't you like them?" Delilah asked. Her hands were crossed over her chest, suddenly feeling that the skirts and dresses she'd chosen might not be quite right for her daughter.

Hearing this, Mirabella quickly explained to prevent another ‘we can replace them if you don’t like them’ kind of extravagant offer. “I’m just more comfortable in pants, and I’ll be wearing a uniform at school anyway.”

Delilah considered this and then conceded, “Alright, my bad. I’ll pick out some pants for you next time.”

over

A daughter who could pull off sweet, cool, and everything in between?
Absolutely needed the right wardrobe!

Shawn, who had been reading the newspaper, also set it aside and picked up a card he had prepared earlier, walking over to her. “Sweetheart, I didn’t know what to get you, and I’m not sure what you’re into. This card is my back-to-school gift to you—no limits, use it for whatever you need.”

Mirabella’s smile twitched as her eyes landed on the offered black card. Weren’t they supposed to be a struggling household? A black card with no spending limit? This felt bizarrely like the luxury of a hidden, wealthy family.

Seeing her stunned expression, Shawn remembered she had grown up in a small town. After a few seconds of thought, he insisted on putting the card in her hand, adding, “Keep the card for now. The pin is your birthday. If you’re not comfortable using it, no worries—I’ll go to the bank later and withdraw some cash for you.”

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Mirabella was forcibly handed the card and felt like she was about to be bombarded with cash. What was going on?

Chapter 29

Chapter 29

After breakfast, with a black credit card snug in her pocket, Mirabella followed Shawn down the stairs. As they rode the elevator, she casually dropped a question, “Dad, aren’t we supposed to be pretty broke?”

Shawn, caught off guard by his daughter’s question and unsure where she might have heard such a thing, sighed as memories of tough times surfaced. “We may not be rolling in dough, sweetheart, but don’t you worry, I won’t let you suffer,” he assured her.

Mirabella tilted her head slightly, skepticism written all over her face. She couldn’t reconcile the black card and the easy talk of spending with being poor. That look made Shawn feel oddly guilty, but luckily, the elevator dinged,

the doors slid open, and he coughed to cover his discomfort as he quickly exited.

Mirabella's lips curved into a half—smile, following him out with an amused glint in her eyes. The Davis residence wasn't far from Parkside High School just a twenty-minute drive, so Mirabella didn't need to board.

Shawn had wanted to walk his daughter into the school's administration office to check in, but the scramble for parking spaces on the first day of school forced a change of plans. After Mirabella reassured him that she would be fine on her own, he reluctantly drove off.

Once Shawn's car was out of sight, Mirabella strolled towards the school gate at her own pace. Entry was by card swipe, and as a transfer student without an ID yet, she was stopped by the security guard.

Mirabella pulled out her transfer notice from her backpack and handed it over. "Will this work?"

The guard took a look, and his expression changed. He called over a colleague before telling her, "You'll need to wait here while I check this with the administration office." With that, he didn't wait for a response and walked off with her transfer notice.

Mirabella watched his retreating back, narrowing her eyes slightly. Was getting into a high school always such a hassle? Annoying as it was, she waited patiently.

But ten minutes dragged on, and the guard hadn't returned. Mirabella massaged her temples, resisting the urge to criticize the school's efficiency.

"Could you chase up your colleague for me?" she asked the other guard politely.

Good looks often made things smoother, and the guard nodded quickly, pulling out his phone to make a call, but there was no answer. After several attempts, he looked apologetically at Mirabella, "My colleague must've left his phone somewhere. No one's picking up."

The thought of waiting indefinitely irked Mirabella, and she glanced at her watch before asking. "Is there a contact number for the administration office or the principal?" Scratching his head, the guard looked even more embarrassed. "Sorry. I'm new here and don't really know these details. Maybe you could wait a bit longer. My colleague might be back soon."

Deciding it was pointless to keep asking, Mirabella chose to wait. Just then, a black sedan pulled up at the gate, and the guard hurried over, leaving Mirabella behind. The car window rolled down, and whatever was shown to the guard instantly brought a respectful look to his face.

Mirabella, head bowed, didn't pay any attention until the sedan honked sharply. She looked up at the sound.

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Chapter 30

The unassuming black sedan glided smoothly along, its ordinariness almost a cloak of invisibility under the scrutiny of passersby. As the vehicle neared, its rear window slid down halfway, revealing a familiar half-face.

Mirabella paused mid-stride, catching sight of the partial visage, a flicker of recognition crossing her face.

James' eyebrows quirked in amusement, his mischievous eyes sparkling with mirth as he caught her gaze. "Locked out?" he teased, the corner of his mouth lifting in a half—smile.

Mirabella's initial surprise quickly dissipated, replaced by a resigned shrug that seemed to say, 'Isn't it obvious?' A soft chuckle escaped James' lips before he offered, "Hop in. I'll get you past the gate."

Wyatt, who had been dutifully driving without a word, nearly did a double-take at the sound of his boss' words. Was this really the same man who usually exuded an aura of detached frostiness?

With an arched brow, Mirabella glanced at the security guard standing nearby, noting his passive stance. After a brief moment of contemplation, she didn't decline the unexpected offer. She strode over, pulled open the car door, and slid into the backseat with a graceful ease.

Meanwhile, Summer, approaching from a distance, caught the interaction and pointed toward the entrance, her voice tinged with surprise. "Emmitt, isn't that Mira over there?"

Emmitt, somewhat preoccupied as he escorted Summer to school, snapped to attention at her words. Following her pointed finger, all he saw was the black sedan making its way into the school grounds, with no sign of Mirabella amidst the crowd. "No, I don't see her, Summer. Are you sure?" he asked, his brow furrowed with confusion.

Though it was a fleeting glimpse, Summer was quite certain that she had seen Mirabella enter the black car. Emmitt, however, seemed to have missed it.

Summer pondered briefly. She withdrew her gaze and murmured, "Maybe I was mistaken. It couldn't have been Mira getting into a stranger's car."

She spoke the last part almost under her breath, too softly for Emmitt to catch properly. "What stranger's car?" he inquired, seeking clarity.

Summer hesitated, then shook her head dismissively. "Never mind." After a brief pause, she added, "Emmitt, I should head in. Thanks for going out of your way to bring me to school today."

Emmitt responded with a simple wave and a smile, which gradually faded as Summer's figure disappeared through the school gates. Was his sister in a stranger's car?

Inside the car, Mirabella turned her head to look at James with a playful tilt of her head, resting her cheek on her hand. "What a coincidence, neighbor boy."

The term 'neighbor boy' made James' lips twitch involuntarily, a wry sense of resignation washing over his handsome features. His voice, low and steady, corrected her gently, "James. That's my name." As his words settled, the car experienced a brief jolt. James raised an eyebrow, casting a casual glance at Wyatt, who sat

ramrod straight in the driver's seat, avoiding any and all eye contact with the rearview mirror.

Unperturbed by the subtle tension in the car, Mirabella maintained her nonchalant demeanor, murmuring. "James... It's a nice name."

James shifted in his seat, crossing his legs comfortably. His tone was light as he probed, "And the person attached to the name? Am I not appealing?"

"It's been a few days, and yet your skin seems to have thickened considerably," Mirabella shot back with a sideways glance.

A soft laugh escaped James as his expression turned more serious. "What was going on at the school gate?" he inquired.