

The Double 231

Chapter 231

Just then, Mirabella turned her head to Jenna and casually said, "You're headed to the hospital, right? Need a lift?"

Jenna snapped back to reality, shaking her head with a dismissive wave. "No, it's alright, don't worry about me."

Mirabella didn't press the issue. Soon enough, she and Leo got into the car.

Jenna stood there, lost in thought, as she watched the car disappear in the distance, still trying to pinpoint where she had seen Mira's brother before.

Inside the car, Mirabella sat in the passenger seat, turning to look at Leo, who was behind the wheel. "Leo, what was it you wanted to tell me over lunch?" she inquired.

Leo's grip on the steering wheel tightened subconsciously before he forced a nonchalant shake of his head. "Oh, it was nothing. Just a small thing." Weird, he always got this inexplicable surge of nerves around his sister. What was up with that?

Mirabella arched an eyebrow, seeing right through him. "You seem tense: It doesn't seem like just a small thing to me."

At her words, Leo straightened up, denying, "Tense? No, not at all."

Mirabella simply smiled, saying nothing.

Leo cleared his throat, about to spill the beans about the variety show, when his phone rang. Glancing at the caller ID, he grabbed the Bluetooth headset beside him and put it on.

"Hey, Emmitt... You're over at my place? Alright, I'll be there soon."

While he talked on the phone, Mirabella turned her gaze to the window, her eyes taking on a distant haze.

After Leo hung up, he looked at Mirabella and suggested, “Emmitt needs me for something. He’s waiting at my place. Let’s swing by: you’ve never seen where I live anyway.” He was clueless about the misunderstanding between Emmitt and Mirabella.

Mirabella’s expression remained neutral, her fingers idly tapping on her thigh. She didn’t object and just hummed in agreement.

Traffic was a bit heavy, and it took nearly fifty minutes to get back to Leo’s place.

Emmitt didn’t have a key, so he waited outside the villa in his car. When he saw Leo’s car pull up with the figure of Mirabella in the passenger seat, his hand stalled on the car door.

Ever since the last mix-up over Catherine, he hadn’t set foot in the Davis family home and had yet to apologize to her. He was too proud to lower his guard and unsure of how to face her.

Now, seeing her with Leo, Emmitt felt a tangle of emotions. After sitting quietly for a moment, he finally stepped out of the car.

On the other side, Leo swiped his card, and the villa’s gates swung open. He then drove the car into the garage.

Mirabella got out and looked at the modern minimalist two-story villa before her, an eyebrow raised in surprise. Was Leo really just an obscure singer? It hardly seemed likely.

At that moment, Emmitt walked in. Noticing someone behind her, Mirabella’s delicate face showed little change as she turned and greeted him with a cool. “Emmitt.”

Emmitt, detecting the chill in her voice, paused before responding with a muted hum. Feeling awkward, he glanced at her briefly before shifting his gaze away. The air was briefly thick with discomfort.

That was when Leo, having parked the car, joined them. He sensed the odd atmosphere but didn't dwell on it. He nodded to Emmitt with a slight purse of the lips. "Got caught in some traffic. Have you been waiting long. Emmitt?"

Chapter 232

Emmitt shook his head dismissively. "It's nothing."

"Let's talk inside," Leo said, striding over to the door. He lifted his hand and pressed his thumb against the scanner. With a click, the door swung open.

Mirabella followed him in, and after a moment's hesitation, Emmitt stepped over the doorway into the house.

Once they were settled in the living room, Leo fetched two bottles of water from the fridge, eyeing his siblings, who had taken their seats on opposite ends of the couch. Emmitt was staring blankly at the coffee table while Mirabella was nonchalantly flipping through her phone, one leg crossed over the other.

These two... from the moment they met up, something seemed off. They were siblings, but they might as well have been strangers sitting in the same room.

Leo furrowed his brow in confusion, placed the water bottles on the coffee table in front of each of them, and took a seat. He cleared his throat and broke the silence, "Emmitt, you mentioned on the phone that you needed to talk to me?"

Emmitt looked up, glanced at Mirabella, then turned his attention to Leo. After a brief silence, he said, "It's nothing major. Just checking if you've signed up for a reality TV show live stream."

Leo's brow creased instinctively. Collins had just handed him the contract earlier that day. How did Emmitt know about it? And why would Emmitt be the one to ask about it on someone's behalf?

*Did Summer send you to ask?" Leo's thoughts immediately went to her. Though he couldn't fathom how Summer knew about his new gig, it wasn't a stretch to imagine, given Emmitt's

fondness for her.

Hearing Summer's name, Mirabella didn't look up from her phone, her face expressionless.

Emmitt nodded. "Yeah."

"Let me guess, she wants me to bring her along?" Leo's lips curled into a wry smile, a hint of

frost creeping into his voice.

After a pause, without waiting for Emmitt to respond, Leo continued, "Tell her it's not

happening. The show's concept is about family participation, and she's not my sister." His tone left no room for argument, his stance unequivocal.

At Leo's words, Mirabella's beautiful eyes narrowed thoughtfully. A reality show? Were they featuring family members?

Emmitt, taken aback by Leo's strong reaction, swallowed the retort that had been on the tip of his tongue, settling instead for a simple, "I got it."

Leo was slightly surprised by Emmitt's lack of protest, which was uncharacteristic of him when

12:12

it came to Summer. He decided not to dwell on the issue and asked casually, "Had too much work lately, Emmitt?"

"It's manageable."

"I've moved back home for now. You can just come over if you need to talk. It'll save you from waiting like today," Leo said in a softer tone,

At that, Emmitt's fingers twitched slightly, but his expression remained neutral as he responded. with a noncommittal hum,

Leo glanced at Mirabella, noting the strange tension between her and Emmitt. Hoping to lighten the mood, he forced a topic, "Mirabella, when's your national competition again?"

Caught off guard while gaming, Mirabella paused her fingers on the screen and, without looking up, replied, "Next Saturday and Sunday."

Nationals?

Emmitt's expression flickered with surprise, and he instinctively looked up at Mirabella. His sister had made it to nationals?

Chapter 233

Leo stroked his chin before turning to Emmitt, completely missing the mixed expression on his face. He said with a hint of pride, "Emmitt, you might not be in the loop, but Mira entered a national competition. I checked her scores, and she's topped the charts every time. The scholarship to Prestige College is pretty much in the bag for her."

Emmitt's gaze lowered, the words 'topped the charts every time' echoing in his mind. After a moment, he seemed to snap back to reality and responded, "Is that so? Well, congrats to you then." His voice was noticeably distant..

Mirabella had been lounging around, absorbed in her phone, and either hadn't heard or simply chose not to respond.

A heavy silence filled the air for a beat.

Feeling uneasy, Emmitt stood up abruptly and announced, "I just remembered I've got something to take care of. Gotta run."

Before leaving, he glanced once more at Mirabella, who hadn't looked up once. He opened his mouth as if to say something but then chose silence and headed for the door.

Leo watched Emmitt's hasty retreat with a puzzled frown, then stood up to follow. "Let me walk you out, Emmitt."

They reached the wrought-iron gate at the entrance, and Leo couldn't help but ask, "Emmitt, is there something going on between you and Mirabella? Some kind of beef?"

Emmitt paused, his lips pressing into a thin line as he recalled all the misunderstandings. A shadow of sadness crossed his eyes. It was more than just a disagreement. He shook his head and said simply,

"I'm out of here."

After his car had disappeared down the street, Leo scratched his head, closed the gate, and went back inside to confront his sister, though he hesitated to speak.

Feeling his gaze, Mirabella put down her phone, arched an eyebrow, and said, "Some questions. don't have answers, and it's better not to ask."

Leo's mouth twitched at the corners.

Switching gears, Mirabella struck a thoughtful pose. She said rather seriously, "However if your want to discuss issues like you trying to rope me into joining you on some reality TV show, we can talk about it."

Leo blinked in surprise, not expecting his sister to have read him so easily on the matter he'd been mulling over since lunch.

After a long pause, he cleared his throat and awkwardly settled onto the couch, asking, "So... would you be willing to do it?"

He tried to look serious, but his voice was a mix of pleading and caution. If any of Leo's

1/2

12:12

showbiz peers could see him now, their jaws would hit the floor.

Atzabella picked up a bottle of water from the coffee table, took a few sips, and then asked, "What kind of reality show requires you to bring a family member?"

Leo scratched his head. "All I know is it's called 'Country Comfort.' It's still in the planning phase, so I'm not too clear on the details."

At the mention of the show's name, Mirabella's expression turned curious.

Country Comfort, rural life... of everyone in the Davis family, she was the one with experience in the countryside. So was Leo's silence at lunch and his unfinished messages all about how to ask for her help without bruising her ego?

Well message received.

"I can give Collins a call. He probably knows more." Leo added after a moment's thought.

Mirabella waved him off. "No need."

Leo paused, puzzled. Was she indicating she didn't want to join him in the reality show?

Chapter 234

As Leo thought back to the moment he had assured his agent, with a solemn swear, that he could handle the situation, he felt a sudden pinch in his cheeks. His mind raced with a myriad of thoughts, and when he looked back at Mirabella, his eyes were filled with a subtle sorrow.

Standing up, Mirabella pretended not to notice Leo's dazed expression. "Leo, where's the bathroom?" she asked.

Leo pointed weakly down the hall to the right, his voice lacking its usual strength. "End of the corridor, then take a left."

With a twinkle in her eye, Mirabella had barely stepped out before she turned back and inquired. "When does your reality show start filming?"

Leo, head bowed, was still contemplating how to persuade her. He heard her voice again and looked up. "Ah... not for a while yet."

"Oh, let me know when it does. I want to be there." Mirabella said before heading towards the bathroom.

"Sure..." Leo nodded absently, and it took a moment before he snapped back to reality. What had Mirabella just said? Did she just agree to join him on the show?!

Elated, Leo pulled out his phone, launched Messenger, and fired off three quick messages to Collins.

[My sister agreed to do the show.]

[Who said I couldn't pull it off?]

[She's my sister, of course I can!]

Collins, phone in hand, raised an eyebrow at the messages from his client. The first one made sense, but the next two seemed oddly defensive. "Why would he keep asking?" he wondered.

Scratching his head, Collins typed back: [Great.]

Pausing, he sent another: [Send me your sister's Messenger. I need to talk about the details with her.]

Leo squinted at the screen, replying: [No need, I'll talk to her myself.]

Collins: [You? What do you know? What can you say?]

Collins: [Just don't slow us down, okay? Send her contact over.]

Collins wanted to dismiss him yet still demanded his sister's contact information. The nerve! With a sneer, Leo exited the chat.

When Mirabella returned from the bathroom, Leo said earnestly, "If anyone adds you on Messenger or asks for your number, just ignore them. People can be devious—you don't want

to get scammed."

Clearing his throat. Leo stood up, grabbed his jacket, and said, "Come on. I'll take you out to eat."

Mirabella watched his retreating figure, deep in thought. Did all those who seemed cool and aloof on the outside have such goofy insides?

Leo headed to the garage to get his car. Mirabella slowly walked out of the villa, taking in the neighborhood with its thoughtfully designed greenery. The detached homes provided a quiet and serene environment—a rare find in the city and certainly not cheap.

Waiting by the roadside, Mirabella suddenly heard a faint click. Narrowing her eyes, she glanced to her left, where something seemed to flicker around the corner of the villa's wall.

She looked back to see Leo still inside, then walked toward the corner with soft, stealthy steps, almost silent.

The man hiding there was reviewing photos on his camera with a satisfied smirk. "What are you looking at?" At that moment, a cool voice reached him.

Chapter 235

The man clutching his camera froze as he heard the voice, lifting his gaze to meet Mirabella's piercing eyes. His hands trembled, nearly dropping the camera onto the ground. He quickly straightened up, suppressing his panic, and capped the lens of his camera. "Nothing's up," he mumbled.

Mirabella pursed her lips, her face expressionless. "Were you just taking pictures on the sly?"

The man looked at Mirabella's overly pretty face, which seemed too young to instill such an odd sense of profound fear in him. He opened his mouth to speak, but before he could get the words out, the camera was suddenly, lightly, in Mirabella's hands.

Flipping through it, she scoffed. "With these skills, you call this sneaking pictures?"

The photos inside were all of her and Leo, taken from a distance and a bit blurry due to the covert nature of the shots. However, the angles were good, making them look quite the couple.

The man didn't have time to wonder how his camera had slipped into her hands so quickly and blurted out, "Give it back." He reached out to snatch it back.

Mirabella raised an eyebrow, giving him a chilly glance. The man's hand hung in mid-air, frozen.

A minute later, Mirabella dusted off her hands, looking completely at ease as she stepped out from around the corner of the fence.

Leo's car was already pulling out. He didn't see Mirabella at the front. He was about to take out his phone when he saw Mirabella's reflection in the rearview mirror and put it back.

Mirabella opened the passenger side door and got in. Leo glanced at his sister with a hint of confusion, asking, "What were you doing over there?"

While buckling her seatbelt, Mirabella replied without batting an eyelid, "Oh, there was a dog. Just went to calm it down."

Hearing this, Leo subconsciously glanced at the rearview mirror again. Where was the dog?

But he didn't dwell on it, started the car, and casually mentioned, "Must be someone's pet that got loose from the neighborhood."

Mirabella leaned back, relaxed in her seat, and hummed a response.

As the car drove out of the neighborhood and onto the street, Mirabella rolled down the window, rested her hand casually on the frame, and with a flick of her finger, something silently dropped and disappeared under the tires of passing vehicles.

After having dinner out, the siblings didn't linger and went straight home. As they entered, they were greeted by Zach's jealous tone, "You two remember this place? Do you even know what

time it is?"

Leo and Mirabella exchanged puzzled looks and then simultaneously checked the wall clock. It was eight, not midnight, right?

Scratching his head, Leo walked over and sat across from Zach on the sofa. Noting the odd look in his eyes, he softly called out, "Zach?"

Zach turned his head away haughtily, his gaze falling on Mirabella, silent.

Mirabella was silent, and after a moment, she also called out, "Zach?"

"Mhm," Zach responded warmly, surprisingly gently.

Leo was shocked. Was this what they called double standards? Mirabella called, and Zach responded; Leo called him, and it was like he was invisible.

Pretending not to notice their expressions, Mirabella scanned the room and asked, "Are Mom and Dad not back yet?"

"They went out for a walk."

Mirabella touched her nose, caught off guard by the unexpected dose of sentimentality. It was no wonder they came back to find Zach with a face full of abandonment issues.

“Ahem, well then, Zach, I’m heading upstairs,” Mirabella began to retreat to her room.

Suddenly, Zach grabbed her shoulder with a loud voice. “You know, my shoulder’s been killing me these past few days.”

At his words, Mirabella’s footsteps faltered.

Chapter 236

Zach caught a glimpse of Mirabella pausing mid-step, a sly twinkle in his eye revealing his successful ploy. Then, rubbing his shoulders, he continued to whine and groan about his discomfort.

Beside him, Leo stood up proactively, offering with empathy, “Hey Zach, want me to give you a shoulder rub?”

Zach’s face darkened in an instant, and he shot Leo a sharp glare.

Leo smirked.

“Mom told me that you’ve got some killer massage skills.” Zach said, deliberately turning to look at Mirabella with a suggestive gleam in his eye.

Mirabella’s mouth twitched in resignation, shaking her head and walking over to him.

“Is your shoulder hurt?” she asked.

Zach nodded.

“Want a rub?” Mirabella raised an eyebrow.

Again, the fervent nodding from Zach.

“Alright then.” Mirabella lifted her hand to his shoulder and squeezed. Instantly, Zach felt tears welling up from the pain. “Ouch... easy, easy!”

Mirabella’s hands didn’t stop: her tone was stern and serious as she said, “Your muscles are tight. That’s a sign of strain, Zach. You’ve gotta take care of this.”

It was too much for Zach; his shoulders cringed under the pain, and he quickly started to backtrack. “I think I’m good. Maybe you don’t need to-”

“No, you’re not,” Mirabella interrupted with conviction, pressing down harder, not giving him any chance to escape.

Zach was on the verge of tears. Why did he have to shoot himself in the foot?

Leo, watching Zach turn pale as if in excruciating agony, instinctively shifted away, a bit frightened by the scene.

After about fifteen minutes, Mirabella finally let Zach off the hook. The moment he was released from her clutches, Zach felt like he had come back to life. He turned to Mirabella, fear still evident in his eyes. Mirabella seemed so delicate, yet her strength was formidable.

Mirabella ignored the ‘you’re terrifying’ look in Zach’s eyes. “How’s it feel now? Still hurt?” “No pain, no pain at all,” Zach shook his head frantically, certain that if he expressed any discomfort, she’d be on him again in a heartbeat.

Witnessing Zach’s quick surrender, Leo shielded his eyes with a hand.

12:13

LIIDITY 230

Mirabella raised her eyebrows slightly, tossing out casually, "Oh, by the way, Zach, I also do acupuncture."

Zach seemed terrified. His sense of personal safety felt threatened once more!

"Ahem, right, you've got homework, right? I won't keep you," Zach waved her off. It was a complete turnaround from his earlier manipulative antics.

"Sure, just call me if it hurts again." Mirabella said before leaving.

Zach thought to himself. "There's no way it's going to hurt again. Not in this lifetime."

Only when she had completely disappeared from sight did Zach let out a heavy sigh, collapsing on the couch as if drained. But soon, he realized his shoulder felt surprisingly light. He moved it around, the stiffness gone, no more soreness.

Zach let out a curious sound, then sat up straight, pressing on his shoulder, feeling no discomfort at all. He had exaggerated a bit earlier, but the pain had been real. His sister's technique was truly something!

Leo, witnessing the emotional rollercoaster on Zach's face, couldn't help but ask, "You good, Zach?"

Feeling relieved, Zach shot him a glance and replied, "Never better."

Leo was speechless. That was not the impression Zach was giving a moment ago.

Chapter 237

Leo mulled over the evening's events, his expression turning serious as he turned to Zach and said, "Zach, I've got to ask you something."

Sensing the gravity in Leo's voice, Zach dropped his usual carefree demeanor and replied, "What's on your mind?"

After hesitating for a few seconds, Leo ventured, "Is there bad blood between Emmitt and Mirabella?"

He had been wallowing in self-pity due to some health issues, and he hadn't paid much attention when his sister came back home, leaving Zach as the one more in the know.

"Why do you bring this up? Did Emmitt swing by?" Zach countered instead of answering directly.

Leo nodded, then shared with Zach the gist of what had transpired that evening.

Zach's brow furrowed as he digested the story. "Why the heck is Emmitt still hanging out with Summer? Didn't he learn anything from the last time?"

"Emmitt definitely has some misunderstandings and biases against Mira; so try to keep her out of it when you see Emmitt, will ya? Mirabella hasn't been back home for long, and we don't want her getting the wrong idea about this family." Zach said with a far-off look and a voice that seemed to drift with the wind.

Leo watched him, a wry smile forming on his lips. "I got it, Zach."

Of everyone in the family, Zach was the most perceptive and clear-sighted.

The next day dawned.

Mirabella rose early, opened the suitcase she had brought with her, and pulled out a bottle of medicine, followed by an old-fashioned iron box. The box had a tricky lock, which she deftly manipulated until, with a click, the lid sprang open.

She took out the silver needles wrapped in sheepskin, quickly inspected them, rolled them back up, and placed them along with the bottle of medicine into the messenger bag she used for school.

After breakfast, Shawn was driving her to school.

Shawn's brand-new car was a bit too flashy. He respected Mirabella's tactful suggestions and had reluctantly resurrected his old Santana from the junkyard. As a result, the once cherished new car was now relegated to the dusty corners of the underground garage.

Each day, as Mirabella headed off to school, she would cast a silent glance at the neglected vehicle, itching to ask her dad to at least maintain the new car. Yet, seeing his apparent

disdain for it, she held her tongue.

After school, Mirabella once again used the pretext of visiting to accompany Jenna to the hospital.

Jake, still in a coma, showed stable vital signs after the treatment and was out of immediate danger.

Kayla was at the hospital that day and was delighted to see Mirabella visiting again. She made Mirabella feel welcome, offering her drinks and cutting up fruit with maternal warmth. With Jenna there to take over, Kayla soon left for home. Jenna had a younger brother in elementary school she needed to take care of.

Only Mirabella and Jenna remained in the hospital room.

Mirabella, a day student specially admitted by Mr. Hammond, didn't have to worry about her grades and had requested to skip evening study hall.

Jenna had taken leave from evening classes and was looking after Jake. However, as a senior, her study schedule was intense, and she was always swamped with papers to write and questions to practice. Before long, Jenna pulled out her work and began tackling it head-on, all while chatting away.

Mirabella sat there, fingers resting on the armchair, contemplating how to administer acupuncture to Jake without drawing attention.

Chapter 238

Jenna's phone burst into a jingle that cut through the silence of the room.

She set her pen aside and fished the device out of her pocket. The caller ID showed it was Bethany Bethany. With a swift tap, she answered, "Alright, I'll be right down."

After hanging up, Jenna turned to Mirabella, "Mira, I need to step out for a sec to pick up my cousin. Be right back."

Mirabella gave a small nod, her features barely shifting. "Sure."

Jenria, clutching her phone, rushed out while Mirabella watched her disappear around the corner towards the elevator before turning to close the door behind her.

Approaching the hospital bed, Mirabella pulled out a set of silver needles she had tucked away in her bag earlier that morning. Unrolling the leather cloth, she took the longest one and leaned over, carefully inserting it into a critical point atop Jake's head.

If any practitioner of alternative medicine had been present, they would have been taken aback by the precision of Mirabella's needle placements. Each point she targeted was delicate, where the slightest mishandling could result in immediate death. Yet, she wielded the needles with an ease that bordered on the reckless, reminiscent of a quack rather than a skilled healer.

Just as she finished with the head, the monitors beside the bed flickered with new activity, a clear sigh of brain wave fluctuations. Mirabella barely glanced at it before continuing her work. She swiftly selected two shorter needles, inserting them into the acupoints on Jake's wrist. Suddenly, Jake's fingers twitched almost imperceptibly. Mirabella noted the movement silently, her mind counting the seconds. Two minutes later, she began to remove the needles.

Meanwhile, Jenna had returned with Bethany and her folks, their footsteps echoing off the hospital walls as they approached the sixth floor.

Leading the way, Jenna reached the door to the hospital room, her hand gently turning the knob. The door swung open to reveal Mirabella, still seated calmly. Jenna quickly introduced her to her family in a hushed tone. "This is my friend. She came to visit Dad."

Bethany's eyes sparkled upon seeing Mirabella. Her thoughts were easily summed up. "Pretty cool lady."

Mirabella rose, her smile courteous as she nodded in greeting. Her beauty and manners disarmed any potential unease. Picking up her shoulder bag, Mirabella addressed Jenna, "I should head out."

Jenna considered her family and didn't insist on keeping Mirabella any longer. "Let me walk you out."

Mirabella simply nodded, accepting the offer. As they stepped out, she pulled a small bottle from her pocket and handed it to Jenna, "Give one to your dad when he wakes up, and then one

more each day after that."

Jenna paused, not quite grasping the meaning of her words but instinctively taking the bottle.

"See you next week." Mirabella waved goodbye and walked away.

Jenna watched her leave before finally bringing her attention back to the small porcelain bottle in her hand. Curious, she unscrewed the lid and sniffed—traditional herbs.

At that moment, Bethany burst out of the room, a wild joy on her face. "Jenna, Uncle Jake's awake!"

Jenna spun around, her eyes wide in disbelief. "What did you say?"

“I said, your dad’s awake!

Tears welled up in Jenna’s eyes as she hastily secured the cap on the bottle and tucked it away. She stumbled into the room to see the miracle for herself.

Chapter 239

After leaving the hospital, Mirabella hailed a cab and headed straight home.

Aside from Marian, who was busy in the kitchen, the house was still home to just one other person – Leo, who had begun to accept his new role as a couch potato.

Every day after school, Mirabella had a little ritual of popping by the bakery downstairs to pick up a slice of strawberry cheesecake, and today was no exception. She walked through the door and handed the sweet treat to Leo.

Looking down at the strawberry cheesecake in his hands, Leo gave his sister a look that was hard to decipher. “My agent says I’ve been packing on the pounds.”

Without missing a beat, Mirabella slung her shoulder bag onto a nearby cabinet, glanced at him, and said offhandedly. “A little extra fluff makes you cuter.”

Leo looked baffled. Since when did gaining weight equate to cuteness?

Mirabella realized she might have chosen her words poorly but was not inclined to correct herself. She plopped down on the couch. A Messenger notification pinged, and she fished the device out of her pocket.

It was a message from Nikolai, whom she had recently added as a contact.

Nikolai: Young lady, take a peek at the proportions in this recipe. Do you see anything amiss? {image}}

Mirabella opened the image to find a common cold and flu remedy but didn't overlook that one ingredient's dosage had been deliberately increased by a few grams.

After pondering for a couple of seconds, she replied. [Is this some kind of special concoction?]

On the other side, Nikolai received her message and instinctively stroked his long white beard. He was puzzled – given the young lady's knowledge of herbs, she should've been able to deduce the purpose of the mix. After a moment, he typed slowly.

Nikolai: [It's for the common cold.]

Nikolai: [Look at the amounts again, more carefully.]

Meanwhile, Leo, who was fiddling with his phone, sat down next to Mirabella and asked, "Hey. sis, do you like music?"

As she replied to Nikolai, Mirabella looked up briefly and answered, "Ah, I listen to it now and then."

Leo touched his nose, somewhat disappointed. No wonder his sister always seemed oblivious to his career. With that in mind, he brought up one of his tracks and hit play. "What do you think? Is it good?" He cranked the volume to the max as if concerned she wouldn't hear it properly.

The sudden blast of sound startled Mirabella, nearly causing her to send an unfinished message. She massaged her temples and said with a hint of exasperation, "Leo, my ears work just fine."

Leo persisted, "But is the song good?"

She nodded. "It's great, really great," her tone dripping with nonchalance.

Leo, sensing her attention was elsewhere, turned off the music with a sulky motion and leaned in to see whom she was chatting with so intently.

Mirabella didn't bother hiding her Streen. Without looking up, she said, "Some old-school alternative medicine practitioner."

Leo glanced over the chat. It was full of incomprehensible jargon, and he quickly lost interest, retracting his gaze.

After sending the last message, Mirabella put her phone down and finally turned to Leo, a beat too late, asking. "Why'd you stop the music?"

"As if you don't know why," he thought, but Leo didn't dare voice his thoughts aloud. He was about to share his latest recording when Marian's voice carried over, interrupting him.

"Dinner's ready."

Instantly, Leo switched off his phone.

Mirabella stood up. "Come on, Leo. Let's eat."

She couldn't resist ruffling his thick, curly locks as she passed by – they were as soft as wool, just as she'd imagined. Satisfied, Mirabella smiled to herself.

Leo, baffled by his sister's behavior, simply followed her to the dining table.

Chapter 240

At the hospital.

After re-examining Jake, the doctor turned to Jenna with a sense of wonder in his voice, "It's nothing short of a miracle that your dad woke up."

The clinic had run every test in the book and had all but written off any chance of the patient regaining consciousness. It was a complete and utter shock when he did—and so swiftly at

that.

The doctor gave Jenna a few instructions before hurrying out of the room. This medical marvel was too astonishing not to report to the chief, Dr. Ray, and his team.

Once the doctor left, Jenna seemed to come back to life. She went to her father, who was now off the ventilator, sat down by his bed, and gently took his hand. “Dad, you’re finally awake.”

Jake had just come around and was still weak. His lips moved as if to speak, but he didn’t have the strength. In the end, he simply squeezed his daughter’s hand in return.

Jenna wiped away a tear. Now that the initial shock had passed, she remembered what Mirabella had said to her in the days leading up to and even right before she had just left.

“Don’t worry. Your dad will wake up in a couple of days.”

“Once your dad wakes up, give him one of these pills and then one every other day from then on.”

Her words always carried the same message. “your dad will wake up.”

Jenna’s hand slid into her pocket, feeling the pill bottle. She recalled Mirabella’s confident expression as she left, as if she was certain Jake was about to wake up. But how could Mirabella be so sure when even Dr. Ray from the hospital said the chances were slim to none? Jenna’s mind was a whirl of confusion, unsure whether to take out the medicine. After all, with her dad’s condition being so delicate, medication wasn’t something to be taken lightly.

Torn, Jenna pulled out her phone and sent a message to Mirabella.

[Mira, my dad's awake.]

Mirabella was in the middle of dinner when she received Jenna's message on Messenger. It was expected. After pondering for a moment, she replied. [The medicine comes from a reputable alternative healer. It's safe to use, no harm.]

Jenna's expression was complex as she read the response. Mira's reply seemed devoid of surprise as if she had anticipated Jenna's concern. Her fingers paused on the screen for a long time before replying. [Okay, I'll give it to my dad now.]

Mirabella glanced at the message and didn't respond again.

Jenna took a deep breath as if making a monumental decision, stood up to pour a glass of

water, and returned to the bedside. She took out the pill bottle, shook out one pill, and whispered, "Dad, I'm going to give you your medicine."

She certainly didn't believe Mira was the type to carelessly advise someone to take drugs. So she was willing to try.

Not long after taking the medicine, Jake fell asleep again. As his breathing maintained steady and had no signs of distress, Jenna's anxious heart gradually calmed down. Remembering she hadn't yet shared the good news with her mother, Jenna walked over to the window and made a call.

After hanging up, Jenna turned around to see Bethany sitting with headphones on, lost in music, and walked over. She took one earpiece out, "It's getting late. You don't have to stay here with me. You should head home."

Bethany's phone was playing a track by Neon Paradox. Hearing Jenna's words, she quickly paused the song and looked up. "Oh, it's okay. I don't have school tomorrow since it's the weekend. I'll stay with you."

She paused for a moment, “Want to listen? My idol’s voice is super healing.” she said, waving her phone screen in front of Jenna.