

The Double 331

Chapter 331

Mirabella cast a sidelong glance at the somewhat introverted Leo and cleared her throat. As her gaze swept around the room, she decided to switch topics. “Mom, what happened to all the knick–knacks around here?” She had noticed as soon as she entered that even the antique paintings her dad always bragged about were missing.

“We’re moving, sweetie!”

Mirabella paused, taken aback. “Moving?”

Delilah nodded affirmatively. “Yeah, we’ve been in this old house for decades. It’s time for a change.”

Mirabella touched the tip of her nose, pondering for a moment. “So, that’s why you and dad have been out and about recently? House hunting?”

Delilah spoke slowly. “We actually bought the house a while back, just spruced it up a bit.”

“Oh.” Mirabella leaned back into the sofa with a lazy stretch. “When’s the big move?”

“Tomorrow. It’s a good day.”

“Alright then.” After a pause, Mirabella asked, “And my new room... the decor?”

“Don’t worry, honey. I made sure it’s a carbon copy of your current one. You won’t even feel the difference,” Delilah said with a smile that practically screamed “Aren’t I thoughtful?”

Mirabella just stared blankly.

“Once we’re settled in, you can invite your friends over. There’s plenty of room,” Delilah added offhandedly.

Mirabella just gave her a silent look. Was the highlight really about having friends over?

“Speaking of which, what about that tutor dad mentioned the other day? What did he say?” Shawn chimed in, recalling the subject.

“He’s busy,” Mirabella replied emotionlessly.

Shawn’s eyes roved. “Maybe you could pass me his contact info?”

Mirabella massaged her forehead, pretending not to hear, then stood up. “I’m heading to my room. Got school tomorrow.” After saying that, she ascended the stairs.

“What tutor?” Leo, who had been quietly listening, asked in confusion.

Shawn glanced at his younger son. His tone was less amiable, “You wouldn’t know him. Why are you asking so many questions?”

Leo sighed. He was definitely the odd one out.

The next day at school.

“Queen Mira, you actually went on a reality show. You’re not planning to break into showbiz, are you?” Jenna pounced on Mirabella with questions as soon as she arrived.

Mirabella casually met her gaze. “You’re overthinking it.”

“For someone academically gifted like you, showbiz would be a waste. Please don’t even consider it,” Jenna implored.

250 2750

Mirabella propped her chin on her hand. Her lips pursed slightly. "Not interested."

Jenna, recalling yesterday's live stream, couldn't suppress her gossipy nature. "That Michelle was from the previous year at Parkside High School. You weren't there, and you wouldn't know, but she's really obnoxious. She got into the student council in order to get her best friend's boyfriend."

Mirabella's eyebrow arched in intrigue.

"And she got kicked out of the council after just two days. To think she's still flaunting that is hilarious. If she knew what you've accomplished at Parkside High School, she'd be mortified." Jenna shook her head in disbelief.

Mirabella put a finger to her lips. "Stay humble."

Jenna's mouth twitched, and seeing Mirabella pull out a book to read, she couldn't help but say with a touch of annoyance, "Babe, you're basically a shoo-in for Prestige College. Do you really need to push so hard? Can't you just enjoy some downtime?"

Mirabella gave her a look and then, as if remembering something, said, "I've got a surprise for you. I think you're really gonna like it."

Chapter 332

Jenna glanced at Mirabella with a hint of suspicion. "What kind of surprise?"

"In a few days, you'll see," Mirabella replied with a cryptic smile.

Jenna touched the tip of her nose, feeling a flutter of unease. "Why do I have a bad feeling about this?" It felt more like a looming scare than a surprise.

“How’s your dad doing now?” Mirabella deftly changed the subject.

At the mention of her father, Jenna’s face lit up with gratitude. “He’s recovering really well; he was discharged from the hospital a couple of days ago. Mira, your remedy worked wonders. Thank you.”

Jenna’s mom had even consulted an expert about the medicine, who confirmed its exceptional quality and noted that it was not available on the market, and certainly not at a low cost.

Mirabella raised an eyebrow. “Glad to hear that.”

“My mom has been wanting to invite you over for dinner. You’re probably not as busy these days, right? How about coming over tonight?” Jenna’s eyes shone with sincere invitation.

“Tonight’s not good, I’m afraid. My family’s moving today.” Mirabella shook her head.

“Oh, you’re moving? Where to?” Jenna asked. Her curiosity was aroused.

Mirabella was silent for a moment. “I’m not quite sure.”

In the afternoon, it was Delilah who came to pick up Mirabella, driving the brand new car she’d recently acquired.

About fifteen minutes later, as they approached a familiar-looking gated community, Mirabella felt a pang of recognition. She turned to her mother. “Our new place is in this neighborhood?”

Delilah swiped a card, and the automatic gates swung open. “Yeah, we bought this house a few years ago but haven’t moved in until now.”

As the car wound its way to a stop in front of a spacious villa, Mirabella squinted at the neighboring houses, marveling at the small world they lived in.

Exiting the car and taking in the grandeur of their new home, Mirabella turned to her mother with a melancholic tone. "Mom, I thought we didn't have money?"

Delilah's eyebrows twitched as she recalled her daughter's earlier questions about their financial status, which had led to a playful misunderstanding that they were short on cash, a misconception they hadn't yet corrected.

Clearing her throat, Delilah responded, "This place was bought years ago, before the property prices skyrocketed. Honestly... it wasn't expensive, didn't cost us much."

Considering the last car her father bought was worth millions and was claimed to be a bargain, Mirabella's expression grew more complex as she looked at their multi-million-dollar villa.

Feeling her daughter's scrutinizing gaze, Delilah feigned ignorance and entered the villa, Mirabella followed, taking in the opulent decor with a sigh. So much for the script of poverty.

"Do you like the decor, honey?" Shawn was arranging his belongings and asked as his daughter walked in.

Mirabella nodded silently, acknowledging the investments made. Appreciation wasn't a choice. It was an obligation.

Delilah came back with a set of items. "Here's the community access card, the keys, oh, and the front door's code is your birthday. Better keep these safe or I'll forget where I put them again."

She then returned to her tasks.

"Sweetie, you might want to check out your room. It's upstairs on the left, the last and largest one," Shawn advised as he placed a vase on a console table.

Seeing her parents busy with settling in, Mirabella figured she wouldn't be much help and headed upstairs. She reached the end of the hallway and pushed open the door to her room.

Chapter 333

The door swung open, and a blast of pink washed over her. Sure enough, the decor matched the old house to a tee.

Mirabella pressed a finger to her temple, sighing softly. She slid the glass door to the balcony open and stepped out, taking in the surroundings. Her gaze lingered on the villa next door, pausing for a moment in quiet contemplation. Shaking off the distraction, she pivoted back into the room. Her eyes scanned over the boxes and items carried over from the old family home before she set to work organizing.

Halfway through, her phone buzzed with a notification from Messenger. It was a message from Nick.

[Mirabella, I've shipped the review materials to you. They should arrive within a week. Keep an eye out for them, okay?]

A wry smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. The overwhelming pink of the room had already jabbed at her heart, and now here was Nick, jabbing at her with a few boxes of study material. She quickly typed out a response: [Nick, we just moved today. Did you send the package to the old address?]

Nick's surprise showed in his text. [Yes, why the sudden move?]

Mirabella settled into a nearby chair. (My parents wanted a change of scenery.)

After a brief pause, she continued: [It's fine, though. When the courier calls, I'll ask them to redirect it here.]

[Alright, send me your new address just in case.]

She fetched the homeowner's card her mother had given her earlier, texted him the new address, and added: [By the way, the incense you asked for was sent the day before yesterday. It should arrive

soon.]

[Thanks, Mira.]

Then, the conversation ended. Nick set his phone aside, leaned back on the couch, and stared at the ceiling, feeling the emptiness of the sprawling house around him.

Having tidied her room, Mirabella headed downstairs.

Shawn was at the door, deep in conversation. She glanced his way briefly before turning toward the dining room. The table was laden with about a dozen dishes, which were obviously delivered from some restaurant.

Delilah was setting the cutlery. "Mira, could you check when Zach and Leo are coming home? On moving day of all days, they should be back early."

"Sure."

Mirabella fished out her phone and called both brothers. After a short while, she hung up. "Leo's almost at the gate, and Zach just left work. He'll be another half hour."

*If you're hungry, darling, go ahead and eat. Don't wait for them." Delilah said.

"I'm okay," Mirabella replied, shaking her head. She poured herself a glass of warm water and leaned lazily against the wall. Her gaze drifted back to Shawn as he finished his conversation and walked back inside.

"Another real estate hound?" Delilah eyed her husband as he approached.

Shawn gave a helpless shrug. "Yeah, I've turned them down multiple times, but they still persist."

Delilah's mouth twitched in bemusement. "Could they be a little off? Why did they have to buy our house?"

"It's beyond me. They're willing to pay double. Wouldn't it be smarter to buy a new development?" Shawn shook his head, clearly not short of money to need such a deal

"Shawn, be careful next time. Don't let them in again. We don't want to get scammed," Delilah

warned with a furrowed brow and serious tone.

"Yeah, I got it." Shawn waved dismissively.

Mirabella remained quietly to the side, listening without chiming in.

Chapter 334

Shawn glanced over at his daughter, Mirabella, who was lost in thought, and couldn't help but call out, "Sweetie?"

With a start, Mirabella looked up and absentmindedly agreed, "You're right, Mom. From now on, we should keep the door closed to anyone who doesn't seem too sharp."

Four faces of his sons immediately flashed across Shawn's mind.

Before long, Leo strolled back into the living room, and immediately sensed his dad's quirky gaze upon him. Touching the tip of his nose, Leo scanned the room. "Zach not back yet?"

"Nope," grumbled Shawn, turning away before settling down next to his daughter. He turned to her. "Last night I burned one of those incense sticks you keep in the cabinet. Slept like a baby."

Putting her phone down, Mirabella said, "Yeah, they're good for that."

“Where did you get them?” Shawn asked. His curiosity was aroused.

Mirabella’s eyelids lifted slightly. “I made them myself.”

Shawn was about to mention “a friend who suffers from insomnia has a birthday coming up, and I’d gift a couple of boxes”, but the words died on his lips at her revelation.

Seeing him falter, Mirabella prompted, “Just spit it out, Dad.”

Shawn beamed. “I was just thinking, my daughter is the best, always has the knack for everything.”

Just as Leo walked over, clutching a bottle of water from the fridge, he overheard his dad laying it on thick. He couldn’t help but roll his eyes. Enough already, he thought. “Does Dad have to compare us

every single day?”

Soon after, Zach returned, and with him came Emmitt. Mirabella, engrossed in her phone, only looked up after a while to acknowledge him with a nod. Her voice was cool, detached but not unfriendly, with a distant politeness.

After the greeting, she was back to her phone. Her fingers tapped away as if she was deep in a chat.

Emmitt glanced her way, contemplating joining her, but seeing her engrossed in her phone and not to be disturbed, he thought better of it.

Dinner was tense as usual. Mirabella ate while occasionally checking her phone, evidently busy with her messages.

Next to her, Leo craned his neck to sneak a peek but couldn’t catch the content of the texts, just the contact’s name.

“Who’re you texting?” Leo whispered.

“Just a friend from online,” Mirabella mumbled through a mouthful of food.

Her voice wasn’t loud, but the word “online” caught the attention of everyone at the table.

Emmitt looked up at her.

“Friend... from online?” Leo set down his fork.

“Yeah.” Mirabella didn’t notice the collective gaze and added, “Someone selling stuff.”

“Oh, you’re not getting scammed, are you?” Leo asked, genuinely concerned. After all, it was unusual to text about online purchases. Mirabella was smart, but a reminder couldn’t hurt.

Mirabella glanced at him and after a brief pause, assured, “Nope.”

“That’s good. Just be careful. Lots of clever scammers out there,” Leo advised earnestly.

Mirabella’s lips twitched in a restrained smile, and then she nodded nonchalantly. If the person she was texting heard that, Leo might just find himself in hot water.

Turning to her mother, Mirabella then said, “Mom, in a couple of days, someone will come to install a new system. Could you let them in, please?”

Chapter 335

Delilah paused for a moment. “What system?”

“The surveillance system, like security system,” Mirabella clarified.

“Oh, right.” Delilah nodded subconsciously, but quickly caught up with the conversation. “Ah, we’ve already got a top-notch security system installed at home.”

Mirabella took a sip of her soup, which had cooled to just the right temperature, and then added, “No harm in having it double-checked.”

Delilah didn’t refuse the offer further. She figured they could just have the technician do a quick walk-through, considering their home was already equipped with the latest in surveillance tech.

After dinner, Mirabella ascended the staircase. Emmitt, who had been lost in thought throughout the meal, soon followed suit to the second floor.

Mirabella had just settled down at her desk when a knock at the door broke her concentration. She raised an eyebrow and stood to answer it. Pulling open the door, she found Emmitt standing there. His handsome face wore a complex expression as he hesitated, “...”

She cut him off with a cool gaze. “No need for apologies. I’m not bothered by it.”

At her words, Emmitt felt a lump in his throat. His hand involuntarily clenched. He would have preferred a confrontation or even an accusation from his sister. Indifference like hers was something one would expect from a stranger, not family.

Her gaze was like a sharp knife, severing the ties between them. To her, he was just Emmitt, a brother by blood, and nothing more.

After a painful silence, Emmitt managed, “Sorry, I had preconceptions. Whether you forgive me or not, I’ll accept it. Like you said, it’s not something you need to dwell on.”

Mirabella simply hummed in response, tucking a stray hair behind her ear. Glancing at her wristwatch, she added, “It’s getting late. I have homework to do.”

Emmitt, realizing the conversation was over, muttered another apology and walked away.

Mirabella watched his retreating figure impassively before shutting her door. Returning to her desk, she booted up her laptop and opened a document filled with code. Her fingers flew across the keyboard, entering a string of symbols that turned the screen black. After a few moments, characters began to dance across the display. Occasionally, she would pause to tweak the code.

Three hours later, she encrypted the modified SOC system driver file, shut down her laptop, and rebooted in safe mode.

Within moments, a red exclamation mark flashed on the screen. "Intrusion failed?" she mused. Her lips curled into a smirk.

After a few seconds of thought, she opened another command prompt and tried a different approach. Minutes later, she forcefully sent out the newly encrypted file. Once the transfer was complete, she erased her tracks and powered down the laptop.

Rising from her chair, she grabbed a pair of pajamas from the wardrobe and headed for the bathroom. Shortly after, her phone on the desk began to buzz with incoming messages incessantly.

Chapter 336

Mirabella stepped out of the shower and reached for her phone. Her lips twitched involuntarily at the barrage of messages that had piled up.

Unknown sender: [Hey, kiddo, can you give it a rest? Shouldn't you be doing your homework instead of haunting me at this hour?]

Unknown sender: [You cracked my brand-new firewall? Can't we have a little mutual respect here?]

Unknown sender: [Sending me your system files is one thing, but encrypting them? What gives?]

Unknown sender: [You think I can't hack it?]

These messages had all been sent about ten minutes earlier. No sooner had Mirabella finished reading them than another one popped up.

Unknown sender: [Damn it, send me the password, now.]

Leaning against the table, Mirabella took her sweet time before replying: [Oh, ready to admit defeat?]

Unknown sender: [I'm owned, boss. Send me your address, and I'll have someone over tomorrow to set up your system.]

She promptly sent the address of her new place.

After a minute, the unknown sender replied: [Wait... you're sending me to a private residence, right?]

Mirabella replied: [Yeah, what'd you expect, the Pentagon?]

The man on the other end couldn't help but curse as he read her message.

Mirabella added: [Password's 23333. Don't forget your promise, kiddo. Bye, I'm off to do my homework.]

Feeling quite pleased with herself, Mirabella put down her phone and walked over to her dresser. She picked up the hairdryer and started working on her hair. Once done, she climbed into bed, drifting off to a dreamless sleep.

The next day, Mirabella went to school for classes.

In the early afternoon, the Davis family's doorbell rang. Delilah and Shawn had just finished lunch and were getting ready for a little siesta when the chime echoed through the house. Shawn glanced at the

monitor by the door and saw two unfamiliar men standing at the gate. He pondered for a moment before heading outside.

“Can I help you?” Shawn asked through the iron gate without unlocking it.

“Hello, is this the Davis residence?” The lead man, middle-aged and exceedingly polite, nodded in greeting, holding a sleek black case in his hand.

“Yes, it is,” Shawn replied.

“We’re here to install your new security system,” the man said, presenting his credentials. “Is now a good time?”

Shawn suddenly remembered his daughter mentioning that someone would be coming by to install a system. Could these be the guys? His gaze scrutinized the presented ID, noting the company name beside a diamond-like logo.

It looked unfamiliar. Probably some no-name firm.

Shawn’s gaze shifted quickly as he opened the door. They parked outside the villa, with one of them cradling a black case as they walked inside. Shawn glanced at the vehicle they had left outside, an utterly ordinary Volkswagen, before securing the gate behind them.

Back inside, Shawn attentively watched as the pair confidently cracked open the case, revealing a compact laptop and a variety of technical equipment and cables. Shawn didn’t fully grasp what all the tools and devices were for, but considering his home was already set up with surveillance, he remarked, “We’ve actually got a surveillance system already installed. If you could just check for any potential vulnerabilities, that would be great.”

After all, these guys had been personally sought out by his daughter. It wouldn’t seem right to abruptly send them on their way. The technicians merely chuckled in response to his comment, carrying on with their work without saying a word.

Shawn, choosing not to interrupt any further, stood by observing, his curiosity piqued as he watched their computer screen.

Chapter 337

On the computer screen, strings of data zipped by. The tech guy's fingers were flying over the keyboard with lightning speed. Next to him, a sleek, black case housed a device that automatically assembled into a compact frame. A button on the frame blinked a menacing red, much like those infrared scanners you'd see in a spy flick. It screamed high-tech.

Shawn, who had been staring for a while, was utterly baffled. He remembered the last time he had a security system installed, and it was nothing like this elaborate setup.

Just a simple computer system and a few cameras – bing, bang, boom, done. What was with all this fancy computer work?

Shawn rubbed his nose, and his confusion deepened. He left the room and headed to the living room where his wife was. “Hey, honey, I don't recall the security setup being this complex last time, do you?”

Delilah, who had glanced at the setup only briefly and knew jack about computers, suggested. “Maybe the guy Mira hired is some sort of specialist for the system?”

“Could be,” Shawn muttered, not quite convinced.

An hour later, the installers had the whole villa's security and surveillance system upgraded and polished off. After giving a quick tutorial on how to use it, they were out the door.

Shawn, with his phone in his hand, was now staring at an app icon that sparkled like a diamond. Tapping it open, he was greeted with live feeds of their entire house. The app was chock-full of neat features – a panic button, automatic power shut-off, night vision activation,

you name it.

The real kicker was the instant alert on his phone if someone tripped any of the sensors at home. No more sleepless nights worrying about break-ins. This setup was light-years ahead of their old system, which, at the time, was touted as top-of-the-line.

Shawn looked up, still a bit dazed, and turned to Delilah. “Where on earth did our daughter find these tech wizards?”

Delilah, who had the same app on her phone, was still figuring it out. “Didn’t she mention some online buddy last night?”

“Even if it’s a buddy from online, how come service is free?” Shawn stroked his chin, puzzled. When they left, he’d asked how much they owed, but they just said there was no charge.

“Maybe Mira paid them online already?” Delilah suggested, without looking up from her phone.

That seemed to be the only logical explanation, though Shawn still felt something was off. Scratching his head, he blurted out, “You know, have you ever noticed that Mira’s friends are all... kinda extraordinary?”

Delilah finally looked up. “Huh?”

Shawn laid it out for her, “Okay, first, the meds she got for us, she said they were a gift from a friend – Leo checked with experts, and they’re practically priceless.”

Second, her tutor gave her two boxes of coffee beans that you can’t find just anywhere. One of them’s a collector’s item, literally impossible to put a price on.

“Third, today’s tech guys. They might look ordinary, but if you really think about it, they’re anything but.”

Delilah gave her husband a sideways glance. “Stop analyzing our daughter and think about yourself for once. Besides, did you even wonder why Mira felt the need to upgrade the security system?”

Shawn clammed up instantly. After a cough to clear his throat, he mumbled, “I better figure out how this app works.”

Delilah just rolled her eyes.

Chapter 338

At dusk

As soon as Mirabella arrived home, she noticed the new surveillance cameras mounted by the front door and several infrared scanners placed high on the walls. Raising an eyebrow, she swiftly approached the devices. Those guys’s movements were efficient.

In the house, she paused at the smart home system installed in the foyer, tapping the screen with her fingertip.

Shawn, who had been leading the way, saw his daughter examining the security panel and circled back. “Oh, I forgot to mention. A couple of guys came by this afternoon to upgrade the security system.”

“Mm–hmm,” Mirabella responded, retracting her hand from the device.

“This new system has more bells and whistles than the old one I installed, but I’ll be darned if I can figure out half of them,” Shawn confessed, with a hint of frustration in his voice. The technicians had only shown him the basics, and after an entire afternoon fiddling with the app, he was still none the wiser.

Hearing this, Mirabella raised an eyebrow. “Let’s go inside. I’ll show you how it works.”

“Alright.”

Shawn nodded and followed his daughter into the living room. Sitting down, he pulled out his phone, launched the app, and showed her a few features, saying, “See these? I haven’t dared to mess with them.”

Mirabella took the phone and began explaining the functions in simple terms. Twenty minutes later, she pressed her hand to her forehead, realizing that she might have overestimated her father’s technical savvy.

Shawn glanced at his daughter sheepishly. “Am I just too old–fashioned for this stuff?”

Mirabella sighed inwardly at his careful demeanor. “No, it’s not you. It’s the software – it’s too complicated,” she replied, keeping a straight face.

Shawn immediately felt vindicated. “Right?! I knew it was too complicated. Your mother insists I’m just being dense.”

Mirabella silently nodded, letting the matter drop.

“If I were dense, would I have a brilliant daughter like you?” Shawn puffed up with pride.

Mirabella sighed. Fine, if that was what you wanted to believe.

Two days later, the three boxes of review materials Nick had sent arrived. Mirabella got

Jenna’s home address and forwarded one of the boxes to her place. It was a local courier

service, so it would be delivered the same day.

The Powell family had invited Mirabella over for dinner several times, and feeling it would be rude to refuse again, she accompanied Jenna to her home after school that afternoon.

The Powell residence was a quaint, vintage-style cottage – a type of home typically inhabited by the well-established local families.

As soon as Mirabella stepped into Jenna's home, Jake and Kayla grabbed her hands in a show of gratitude, showering her with thanks until Jenna managed to extricate them from her parents' ceaseless chatter.

Jenna led Mirabella to her bedroom, where they were both greeted by a large box. Jenna opened it, and her eyes widened in shock as she discovered a trove of test papers and study materials. She was so stunned she could barely breathe.

Turning to look at Mirabella, who leaned against the doorframe with a relaxed air, Jenna recalled their conversation from a few days prior and the question about her address from yesterday. "Wait... Queen Mira, is this the 'surprise' you were talking about?"

Mirabella nodded. "I did the math. If you do one test paper per day, you'll finish just in time for the final exams. No need to thank me."

Jenna was speechless. One paper a day... That was so cruel!

After a beat, Mirabella arched an eyebrow and added, "Of course, if you'd like to do two a day, that's an option as well. I've got two more boxes where that came from."

Jenna's mouth twitched sharply at the thought.

Chapter 339

"Where on earth did you get all these test papers and study materials?" Jenna asked incredulously. With Mirabella's grades, she hardly needed this kind of stuff.

Mirabella glanced at her. "Don't ask."

Jenna was speechless.

Soon after, Kayla called them down for dinner. When she found out the box of study materials in her daughter's room was a gift from Mirabella, her fondness for the girl shot through the roof. After all, it was rare these days to find someone who took such care in selecting study materials for a classmate.

When Jenna found out what her mother thought, she nearly passed out. Life was so unfair. Mira had managed to hurt her feelings and yet scored brownie points with her parents.

Mirabella didn't stay long at the Powells' after dinner, making an excuse to head home early. Upon leaving, Jake handed her a gift which she reluctantly accepted after failing to decline.

The gift was a wooden box. Mirabella didn't open it at the Powells', and when she got home, she casually placed it on the table, grabbed a bottle of water from the fridge, and went upstairs.

Past ten, Shawn entered his room and noticed the wooden box on the table. He paused, walked over, and picked it up. The carving on the wooden box was quaint, similar to the carving on the cases Shawn used for his cherished calligraphy and paintings. He opened it, and sure enough, inside was a scroll.

Shawn carefully unrolled the painting, and his eyes widened in shock. It was a painting by a famous artist Shawn, a connoisseur of art, recognized it as an authentic piece after only a glance, and was instantly thrilled.

"Shawn, what are you looking at?" Delilah came over, glanced at the painting, then noticed the wooden box on the table. "Did your daughter bring you another gift?" She had seen Mirabella

with the box earlier.

The excitement was still fresh on Shawn's face. Hearing his wife, he looked up in surprise.

"This is from Mira?"

“Yeah,” Delilah nodded.

Shawn looked dazed. How come everything his daughter brought home was extraordinary?

Delilah noticed his expression, and then her gaze fell on the painting, which looked quite ancient. “Whose masterpiece is this? An original or a replica?”

“It’s an original!” Shawn took a deep breath and then carefully re-rolled the painting and placed

it back in the box.

Delilah pursed her lips. Well, if Shawn was handling it with such care, it must be truly precious.

The next day, Mirabella came downstairs to see Shawn in the living room looking a bit off, with dark circles under his eyes – clearly, he hadn’t slept well.

She approached him. “Dad, did you have a bad night?”

“He didn’t have a bad night; he didn’t sleep at all,” Delilah said as she handed a glass of milk to Mirabella.

Mirabella’s lips twitched. “What happened?”

It was only then that she noticed the object in Shawn’s arms – the same one Jake from the Powells had insisted on giving her.

“Sweetheart, where did you get this from?” Shawn asked, placing the wooden box carefully on

the coffee table.

“Oh, that was a gift from a friend’s dad. What’s inside? I haven’t opened it yet,” Mirabella spoke slowly.

Shawn’s mouth twitched upon hearing this. There it was again, another gift from someone else...

Chapter 340

“Look at this, it’s a painting.” Shawn said as he opened the box and carefully took it out. unfolding it for a better view.

While Mirabella was knowledgeable about many vintage trinkets, she didn’t have much of an eye for ancient art. “Is there something off about this painting?”

*This artist’s works are mostly collectibles, fetching pretty hefty prices,” Shawn explained.

Mirabella paused, then with an air of nonchalance, she replied, “Oh, well, you better keep it safe. then.” After all, her medicine was worth a pretty penny too.

Shawn took in his daughter’s composed demeanor, as if the painting was no more than just a piece of paper. He opened his mouth to speak, but Mirabella seemed to anticipate his question, “Don’t worry, Dad. It really is a gift from a friend’s father. You can keep it without any concerns.” After saying that, she turned and walked towards the kitchen for breakfast.

Shawn touched his nose, watching her retreat. “This kid...”

“Let it be. If someone gifts such an expensive painting, there must be a reason. Besides, your daughter isn’t the type to lose her sense of proportion,” Delilah chimed in from the side.

What more could Shawn say? He soon tucked the painting away in the storage room, adding it to his collection of antiques. Worst case scenario, he’d invite the giver for a dinner and return the favor with another antique.

Elsewhere, Nick lay reclined in his chair. His eyes were tightly closed, and his pale face was almost devoid of color. His arms trembled on the armrests, and his body twitched intermittently.

Sitting in front of him was his therapist, whose forehead was beaded with sweat. "LIN, wake up. Don't keep falling into these nightmares. You have to fight them."

After two more minutes, seeing no sign of Nick coming to, the therapist reluctantly grabbed a flashlight and shone it directly onto his eyelids. In an instant, the trembling figure jolted awake, pushing the therapist aside and stumbling into the bathroom.

He turned on the faucet, splashing cold water on his face for a full five minutes before he began to feel alive again, with clarity returning to his mind. Staring at his gaunt reflection that seemed even more drawn than the last time he'd seen Mirabella, Nick wiped his face and walked out of the bathroom to sit back down, gazing upward. "You can go." He was speaking to the therapist. The therapist sighed, looking at him. "Nick, you can't keep running from your fears. It's only going to make you weaker."

Nick just gave a half-hearted smile and closed his eyes again, not saying another word.

With a shake of his head, the therapist said, "I'll be off then. Call me if you need anything?"

Soon after, the sound of the door closing echoed in the room as Nick slowly opened his eyes. The bloodshot eyes indicated too many sleepless nights. His phone on the nearby table vibrated. Nick lay there for a few more minutes before he finally sat up and picked it up.

It was a message from Mirabella. (Nick, I've received the documents, and I hope you've gotten the incense I sent as well?)

Nick's fingers hesitated for a moment. He'd been in the lab for the past couple of days and was just back. Any deliveries would likely be in the storage locker at the manor. His gaze sharpened

as he grabbed his phone and walked out of the room.