

The Double (or More ?) Life of The Fake Heiress Chapter 45

Chapter 45 Asteping out of Catherine's apartment, Mirabella halled a cab straightaway and made her way back to the Davis

udence. Upon her arrival, she noticed several pairs of shiny men's dress shoes lined up at the front door. A flicker of curiosity crossed her eyes—were they having aquests?

After pondering for a few seconds, she said her freshly drawn keys back into her purse, turned on her heels, and strode kward th Nevator, Lucky for her, the elevator remained on her floor, doors ready to welcome her in.

Descending back to the ground floor, Mirabella settled herself on a public bench. Her striking beauty drew glances passersby, including children who couldn't help but steal a few extra looks.

Dressed in a hoodie today and tired of the attention, she pulled up the hood over her head and dug out her phone to immerse herself in the digital world. Before long, she no longer felt the weight of onlookers' stares.

She Estlessly played a few rounds of a competitive game she had downloaded recently—a game that soon proved to back challenge. Closing the app, she seemed to be struck by a thought and swiftly opened her Messenger.

Her list of friends on Messenger wasn't extensive. Her fingertips scrolled through, dragging the contact nicknamed "Y out of the blacklist, And with that, she sent a message.

The Pit (Be careful these next few days. Don't go out causing a stir it It's not necessary.)

"Y" must have been glued to their phone because they replied almost instantaneously with a barrage of messages. Y: [Oh, my dear lord, you finally remember me.]

Y: [You have no idea what kind of devastating torture I've been through recently.]

Y: [Hungry and cold, kneeling at the chapel every day, feeling completely drained.]

Y: [Ancestor, can you find a way to spring me out? | miss the fresh air on the outside.] The Pilt: [-If you've got the energy to complain this much, you're clearly not that drained.] Y: [Please, show me some mercy.]

The Pilt [Logging off.]

Y: [Wait, what do you mean by “be careful? Can you be more specific?]

However, Y’s last message was met with a glaring red exclamation mark, and the notification (Message failed to send because the recipient has blocked you.)

Y: [2277]

[Message failed to send because the recipient has blocked you.]

Y: [Wait!]

[Message failed to send because the recipient has blocked you.]

Mirabella exited Messenger and looked up just in time to see a group of burly men in matching black suits exiting the lobby. The leader held a silver briefcase that gleamed under the light. They looked like they meant business as if they had just finished a debt collection-intimidating enough to make any nearby resident take a wide berth.

Narrowing her eyes, Mirabella’s gaze casually swept over the men’s shiny shoes, and her expression turned thoughtful for a split second.

The men didn’t notice Mirabella as they left the building, heading towards the parking garage with a familiarity that suggested they were regulars. Frowning slightly as their figures disappeared, she rose and stepped back into the lobby. She pressed the elevator button and ascended once more.

When she exited the elevator, the array of black, shiny shoes that had been at her doorstep were now gone. Chapter 45

With a contained gaze, Mirabella produced her keys and unlocked the door.

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Mirabella had barely stepped into the living room when Delilah, who was busy organizing boxes, looked up and almost jumped out of her skin. The ledger she was holding clattered onto the floor.

“Mira... what brings you back so soon? Weren't you supposed to visit Mrs. Catherine?” Delilah asked, her face a picture of surprise. Quickly, she bent down to retrieve the ledger and tossed it back into the box without a second thought.

Beside her. Shawn, calculator in one hand and spectacles perched on his nose, set down his device. He glanced at his wristwatch before asking with

mild confusion, "Honey, you haven't been gone for more than a few hours. Did you forget something?"

Mirabella cast a nonchalant glance at the box by Delilah's feet and replied casually, "She had company, so I came back." "Oh, I see..." Delilah said, the matter seemingly settled in her mind.

After a brief pause, she continued without much thought, "You haven't eaten yet, have you? Your dad and I thought you wouldn't be back for lunch, so we haven't prepared anything. Just give me a moment to put these away, and I'll start on some food."

As she spoke, Delilah quickly tossed a few more ledgers onto the coffee table into the box, and Shawn's calculator followed suit. "Shawn, can you take this stuff back to the room? I'll get started on lunch," she instructed.

"Sure thing." Shawn replied, sliding off his glasses and hoisting the box as he headed upstairs.

Mirabella's gaze lingered on his retreating figure, her thoughts a mystery. She followed Delilah into the kitchen, lending a hand with the vegetables. She then asked, as if it were an afterthought. "Did we have any visitors today?"

Delilah shook her head. "Nope, why do you ask all of a sudden?" she replied, wondering if Mirabella had sensed something amiss.

"When I came in, I noticed a couple of extra clean pairs of shoes by the shoe cabinet," Mirabella said, her downcast, her voice betraying nothing unusual.

Delilah paused for a moment before laughing it off, "I was tidying up the shoe cabinet this morning and got distracted by your dad. Must've forgotten to put them away."

Mirabella simply hummed in acknowledgment, then seemed to remember something else. "Oh, and Mom, I ran into a group of men in black suits while waiting for the elevator downstairs."

Delilah paused again, about to respond, when her daughter continued. "They looked quite intimidating. Kind of like those debt collectors you hear about, you know? We don't have any debts, do we?" Mirabella's gaze was serious as she looked at Delilah.

Feeling a strange sense of guilt under her daughter's scrutiny, Delilah quickly shook her head. "No, we don't owe anyone anything!" But after a few seconds, she probed, "Were those men you saw really that-frightening?"

"Yeah, they didn't seem like good news," Mirabella stated plainly.

Upon hearing this, Delilah's throat tightened around the words. 'They're just from the company's finance department, not debt collectors. She swallowed them back down.

Shawn was right to worry. The company's staff had a daunting image, and even if she told Mirabella those were just finance guys, it might scare her. Worse, her daughter might start suspecting her parents of being involved in unlawful business dealings. No, she couldn't let Mirabella know the truth.

Regaining her composure, Delilah said with a steady voice. "It could be that someone in the building took out a loan with steep interest rates. If you run into these types of people again, make sure to steer clear, alright?"

Mirabella turned to look at Delilah, her gaze intensifying slightly as a faint shadow cast by her long eyelashes fell upon her face. She didn't press further, simply placing the last of the prepped vegetables into the basket.

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Ate dinner, Arabella retreated to her room, leaving Delilah and Shawn alone in the living room. Delilah lingered at the bh, not in any rush to clear the plates and silverware. Instead, she recounted her kitchen conversation with thesa kwahy to Shawn.

tok Awa's under the impression that we're up to our eyeballs in debt," Delilah said, propping her elbows on the tabs and furrowing her brow in thought. Though their daughter hadn't pressed the issue further, Delilah's intuition told her that Mira bait certainly gotten the wrong end of the stick.

Shawn glanced at her. "Surely it's not that bad. She just happened to run into the accountant downstairs." Delilah shook her head. "No, the first thing out of her mouth was whether we had visitors today."

"You might be reading too much into it. She was probably just making conversation. Besides, Mira Isn't the type to get worked up over such things" Shawn said nonchalantly.

"I hope you're right," Delilah sighed, then her eyes lit up as an idea struck her. "What If we gave her another credit card? That way, she wouldn't think we're drowning in debt, right?"

At this suggestion, Shawn actually found the idea quite reasonable, but added, "The last black card I gave her, she hasn't touched it once."

Delilah raised an eyebrow. "Simple. I'll just withdraw some cash and hand it to her."

"That won't work. When I drove her to school on the first day of school, I planned to stop by the ATM for her, but she Shawn immediately dismissed the idea with

said kids these days all use mobile payments. Cash is too
a shake of his head.

"Uh... how about a transfer? Oh, right, how could I forget about Messenger!" Delilah slapped her forehead, stood up, and fetched her phone from the living room.

They had added each other's contact on Messenger ages ago, and Delilah quickly located her daughter. While opening the payment panel she asked, "Shawn, how much do you think I should transfer to Mira? Half a million? Or a full million?"

Shawn's mouth twitched at the corners, "Let's keep it low-key. You'll give her a shock like that."

After all their family had always upheld the principle of modesty and not flaunting wealth. Even their foster daughter was unaware of their real financial status, believing they were just an average family. Of course, anyone paying close attention would realize that everything in their home was far from average.

Delilah rolled her eyes at her husband's comment. "And were you this concerned about being low-key when you handed her the black card the other day?"

Shawn cleared his throat, pretending not to hear his wife's pointed question.

Delilah pondered for a moment and then suggested, "How about I just transfer ter thousand? That's modest enough, right?"

Shawn agreed. "That's fine." Delilah quickly typed in the transfer amount of ten thousand and hit confirm, only to be greeted by a bank limit notification.

"Oh, come on, my card can't even transfer that much at once?" Delilah's face darkened with frustration. What kind of ridiculous restriction was this, thwarting her efforts to clear up her daughter's misunderstanding?

Shawn's eyebrow quirked. "Why not transfer a thousand each day? That way, she'll get a little spending money daily. Wouldn't that make her even happier?"

“True, that’s a great idea. And it’s also a chance to strengthen the bond between her and me,” Delilah nodded, confirming the transfer.

Upon hearing his wife’s remark about ‘strengthening the bond’ with their daughter, Shawn paused for a few seconds

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Back in her room, Mirabella hefted her suitcase from the closet, fresh from her trip to the county town, when her phone chirped with the tone of a new message. She paid it no mind, leisurely unzipping her luggage to rummage inside for a long box.

It was filled with incense sticks, each about the length of a finger. The supply was dwindling, but it was enough to last a month or two. Mirabella glanced at it, snapped the lid shut, and casually set it atop her desk.

Her phone pinged again with another message. Only after she stowed her suitcase away did Mirabella reach for her phone, her brow furrowing at the sight of two bank transfer notifications on the screen.

She unlocked her phone and opened the Messenger app. Both transfers were from her folks downstairs, and neither amount was small—each had sent a neat sum of ten thousand dollars.

Rubbing her temple, Mirabella was puzzled by her parents’ sudden and synchronized financial flair. After pondering for a moment she didn’t accept the transfers. Instead, she sent a question mark emoji to both.

Almost immediately, her mother replied: [Sweetie, it’s for next week’s allowance. Grab it quick. “Heart emoji* Mom loves you) Staring at her mom’s message, Mirabella paused for a few seconds before responding. [I’ve still got money on me.]

Delilah: (Oh, honey, just take it. A girl can never have too much spending money.)

Delilah: (And if you don’t take it, I might just have to spend this money on some new clothes for you!)

Mirabella glanced at her closet, packed with unworn clothes, and her lip twitched. She decisively hit the accept button. Meanwhile, her dad’s message popped up.

Shawny: [Pumpkin, you said cash was inconvenient last time, so your old man went all the way to the bank to get set up with online banking. | just linked it to Messenger. Go ahead and accept it.]

Mirabella's expression was a mix of amusement and exasperation as if to say, "Nice try on the modern dad act." She quickly typed out her response.

The Pilt if | don't accept, are you just going to find another way to give it to me?] Shawny: [Heh, you're so sharp, kiddo!] The Pilt [Fine then.]

Just like that. Mirabella found herself the unexpected recipient of a substantial windfall. Even more bizarre was that she was compelled to accept the so-called 'allowance' from her parents every subsequent day. They were completely unavoidable.

After ending the Messenger exchange with Delilah and Shawny, her gaze drifted back to the incense box on her desk. After a moment's contemplation, she scrolled through her contacts list, found a number, and dialed. The call connected quickly, and a cool, deep male voice drifted through. "Kiddo, what's got you calling out of the blue?"

The word "kiddo" made Mirabella's lips twitch involuntarily, but she had a favor to ask, so she let the nickname slide. "Are you free? | need a favor."

On the other side of the line, James stopped his subordinate's report with a wave of his hand, leaning back in his chair with a lazy air. "Shoot what do you need?"

"I need you to deliver something to my grandma," Mirabella said, cutting straight to the chase. James had braced himself for something serious, so he was taken aback by the simplicity of the request.

When Mirabella heard no immediate reply, she figured he wasn't keen on the errand. "If you're busy, forget it." Then she planned to hang up when.

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"You know, kiddo, your patience could use a bit of work," James said with a hint of an exasperated sigh, like a light breeze whispering through the leaves, faint and fleeting.

Mirabella's eyes narrowed slightly, her finger hovering over the end call button before she shifted it away, asking again with a bit of grit, "So, are you going to help or what?"

The corner of James' mouth lifted in a half—smile. "In a hurry, are we?"

“Not particularly, but it'd be great if you were free today.” Mirabella replied after a brief moment of thought. “Alright, shoot me your address and I’ll send someone to

“Okay, I'll drop you a pin. Thanks.”

Pick it up.”

With that, Mirabella hung up and quickly opened her Messenger. Without hesitation, she found James’ new chat and sent him the location of her apartment complex.

James received the pin on Messenger and shot back a quick [OK] Then, he looked up at his crew standing a short distance away, each with a look of shock in their eyes.

His eyes narrowed as his mild manner on the phone vanished, “That's enough for today. Dismissed,” he said, his voice cold and detached.

The team jolted to attention, hastily averting their eyes and scurrying out without a word.

Wyatt was the last to leave, and he was the one who got called back. “Wyatt, I need you to pick something up.” Wyatt halted, turned around, and looked at his boss. After a few seconds of silence, he asked softly. “For Mirabella?” James absently twirled his phone in his hand and hummed in affirmation.

Wyatt’s expression grew complicated. Despite his intense curiosity, he knew better than to pry. He nodded in understanding and made his way out. Just as he was about to step out, James, who'd been lounging lazily in his chair, stood up. “Never mind, I’ll go myself.”

Wyatt, taken aback, could only think, “Is this really the boss I know? I

Twenty minutes later, the car pulled up outside Mirabella’s apartment building. James sent a quick message to Mirabella via Messenger. Soon after, a slender young woman emerged from the weathered iron gate.

As the car window slid down James turned to look at Mirabella, his cool demeanor tinged with a touch of curiosity. “It’s the weekend. Why aren’t you dropping this off at your grandma’s yourself?”

Mirabella handed him a wooden box, her beautiful face showing no particular emotion. She simply said, “It's inconvenient for me.

James glanced at the wooden box before looking back at Mirabella, his lips quirking. "Is it that stepmother of yours giving you trouble again?"

Mirabella gave him a side glance filled with complex emotions. After a moment, she joked, "Anyone would think bugged me with all you know."

nk you've

James chuckled and shook his head. "The issues with your stepmother's family aren't hard to guess."

Mirabella gave a mock salute. "Then I entrust my package to you. I'll treat you to dinner another day."

James raised an eyebrow, half in jest. "You trust me just like that?"

Mirabella had already turned to leave, but at his question, she paused and turned back halfway. The breeze caught her hair, brushing it against her cheek. She casually tucked a strand behind her ear, her gaze casually landing on James' face, her smile ambiguous, "It's nothing of value anyway."

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With those words, she walked away, her posture proud and unbothered.

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James watched Mirabella's retreating figure, a proud little spitfire if he ever saw one. It took a moment before a chuckle escaped him, and he shook his head in bemusement.

Piloting the car up front, Wyatt glanced in the rearview mirror at his boss, who seemed totally unfazed by the apparent snub. He questioned himself yet again. Was this really James? It felt like a switcheroo.

"Drive," James said, his tone languid and ice-cold, a stark contrast to his earlier demeanor. Wyatt was stunned. No, his boss was still the same.

As Wyatt revved the engine, he couldn't help but sneak a peek at the old wooden box in James' grasp, his curiosity piqued. "That box looks ancient. What's in it?"

James lowered his gaze to the box, which seemed to be crafted from mahogany with ornate carvings that suggested its age. The comers were worn smooth, and the color deepened, which indeed made it look quite vintage, like a relic from another time. A particular symbol etched on the box seemed vaguely familiar to James as if he had seen it somewhere before.

He pondered for a moment and toyed with the latch but ultimately didn't open the box. Instead, he placed it beside him and turned to look out the window before saying offhandedly. "Curiosity killed the cat, you know."

Wyatt remained silent. Could Mirabella be someone with extraordinary talents?

Around half an hour later, they pulled up to Catherine's apartment complex.

"I can take it up for you." Wyatt offered as he killed the engine and unbuckled his seatbelt. James glanced at the wooden box. "No, I'll go. Wait for me here."

Wyatt looked surprised but nodded. "Be careful."

James arched an eyebrow. "You worry too much."

With

the box in hand, he exited the car, leaving Wyatt to rub his nose. Old habits die hard, after all. Riding the elevator up. James soon rang Catherine's doorbell.

A couple of minutes later, the inner door swung open, and as Catherine recognized who stood outside, she hurriedly unlocked the security door. "James, dear, you've come!"

James greeted her with a cordial smile. "Hello, Granny. How are you?"

"Come in, come in," she urged, finding him a clean pair of slippers from the shoe cabinet. "What brings you by today? No classes?"

Slipping into the slippers, James followed behind her, his voice genteel. "I had the afternoon off and thought I'd swing by to check on you."

Once in the living room, James looked around before handing over the wooden box. "Granny, this is something Mirabella asked me to bring you."

Catherine was about to offer James a glass of water when she heard his words. Her hand trembled, the glass slipped and crashed to the floor, shards and water scattering everywhere.

"Careful, Granny," James quickly said, putting the box on a side table.

As he reached out to aid her to the sofa and was about to tend to the broken glass, Catherine's hand shot out, gripping his arm. Her face had turned pale, and her lips quivered. It took her a moment to stammer out a complete sentence. "Mira does she not wish to visit me anymore?"

James, taken aback by Catherine's distress, paused.

