

Eight Uncles 41

Chapter 41 Memory Loss

The little spatula had knocked Winona with such force that she momentarily let go of Hannah who dropped onto the floor. Winona stumbled backward onto the road, almost getting hit by the passing car. She came to her senses at the very last second, jumping out of the way and narrowly avoiding a crash. However, she took a fall by the roadside and hit her head on the curb.

“Are you crazy?!” the car driver shouted as he drove past.

Liam quickly scooped a shellshocked Hannah into his arms. Anthony eyed the little spatula lying on the floor. It was a gift from Gilbert to Lilly for her to use as an accessory when she played house. Who would have thought it would be the weapon to knock Winona out and cause her head to bleed?

Lilly fidgeted with her tiny hands, looking uncomfortable. “Uncle Anthony, I might have used too much strength...” Her Uncle Anthony had always warned her not to display her strength in public. Oh no, she made a boo-boo.

Anthony looked at his niece’s guilty face and ruffled her soft hair. “It’s alright, Lilly. She deserved it.” Anthony was not too worried since they were only among family right now.

From afar, they could see Winona lying on the ground, clutching her bleeding head and moaning in pain. Her head was ringing as it bled profusely. She could feel a growing bump on her forehead, caused by the rock her head had landed on when she tripped.

She grasped for air and let out a strangled sigh as she cried. “Liam, it hurts... hug me please...”

Members of the Crawford family, who had been discussing the commotion in hushed murmurs and whispers, all turned to look at Winona Jackson.

Liam was not one to say much usually, but even he was stunned by his ex-wife’s antics. “Are you sick? Hug you? I’d rather hug a pig.” Winona remained silent.

“Winona, your divorce with Liam is finalized. Don’t make things difficult for us, or I’ll guarantee you won’t have anywhere to go in Clodston,” Old Mrs. Bettany Crawford threatened.

Winona closed her eyes, trying to hide the pain and misery she felt. She was lying on the ground wincing in pain and nursing her injuries, yet the Crawfords could not find it in them to have a sliver of pity or empathy for her. She wondered if any of them had a beating heart. She could not understand why they were so insistent on tearing Liam and her apart and making sure the divorce went through, but she knew it was too late to turn things around.

She regretted listening to her mother’s silly idea about begging the Crawfords to take her back. She should have refused to leave on the very day they kicked her out of the house. Her regretful thoughts were interrupted by the sound of loud sirens blaring in the air. Not long after, two police cars stopped by the road close to them and a few police officers rushed down from the car, surrounding Winona.

“Don’t move! Winona Jackson, you are under arrest!” one police officer shouted as the rest of them pointed their guns and batons at her.

Winona was beyond shocked and mortified. How did she end up being arrested, when she was clearly the one who was injured here?

“Why... are you arresting me...?” she asked weakly.

The police officer produced an arrest warrant from a file. “New evidence has turned up against you in the murder of May Lee six years ago. Winona Jackson, you are now under arrest for murder in accordance with the law,” he declared.

Winona’s heart sank. It was impossible! Six years ago, they could not find any conclusive evidence to prove that she was the murderer. What could they have possibly found now? Were they trying to frame her?

Winona feigned shock as best as she could. “Who is May Lee? What are you talking about? I don’t know a May Lee...”

“There was a human hand found inside the West City Mall statue. The hand was clutching onto a wrapped piece of paper. Based on our forensic team’s analysis, the fingerprints on the paper belong to you, Ms. Jackson,” the police officer explained before producing another document from his file. “The wrapping contained some bank notes. We traced the bank notes to the ATM machine the money was withdrawn from based on the serial number. The \$20,000 was withdrawn by you from an ATM machine in a neighboring district six years ago. The evidence is concrete. Take her away!”

How could this happen? Winona thought to herself. How could this actually happen? It had been so long ago! How did they find out?!

Desperate times called for desperate measures, she realized as she looked at the officer who was about to put her in handcuffs. She took tentative steps backward with a blanked-out expression as she stammered, “Wh... what are you talking about? Liam... what’s happening? How did I end up here? I... I don’t remember anything...” Her lips trembled as she sobbed. “Liam... I’m in pain... Please come here and hug me...”

The Crawfords were stunned into silence. Did she lose her memory from hitting her head too hard? The timing was suspicious, but at the same time not entirely improbable...

Lilly slanted her head to one side as she considered Winona’s confused state of mind. “Uncle Anthony, what’s wrong with Aunt Winona?” she asked innocently. “Is she acting silly? Why does she need to act silly? She’s usually silly enough.”

Winona wanted nothing more than to give Lilly a piece of her mind, but she swallowed her pride in hopes of putting on a good show for the Crawfords. “Oh no, my head... my head hurts so much. I... can’t remember anything. Why am I here? Why are you arresting? I don’t know anything!!” she wailed hysterically.

Most of the police squad were at a loss at what to do, but the commanding officer took charge quickly enough. “We’ve seen plenty of criminals who claim insanity or memory loss, so your tricks won’t work here. You’re still fully responsible for the crime you committed, lady. Take her away!”

Two officers walked up to Winona and grabbed her by the arms on each side.

“Liam! Liam... save me please!” Winona cried out pitifully. “Why are they taking me away? What’s going on?! I’m not pretending here. I don’t know what’s happening!”

Winona undoubtedly put on a good show that could fool any stranger. Unfortunately, it was of no use in the eyes of the law, since a person could be convicted of the crime they had committed even if they lost their memory. As she was escorted by the officers into the patrol car, Winona finally broke down.

“Liam! Liam!! I was wrong, it’s all my fault. Please ask them to let me go!” she begged. “Bettany, please! I’m begging you! Hannah is still so young, she can’t lose her mother at this age!” The car door clicked shut once the police had placed Winona in the back seat, but Winona was still frantically clawing at the window and crying for mercy. However, it was all too late. The jail sentence for the intentional manslaughter of May Lee, on top of an attempted murder of Liam by poisoning, was at least ten years. Liam Crawford had already filed for divorce, cutting off all ties between Winona and the Crawfords, so none of the Crawfords had any reason to come to her rescue. Her own mother was unreliable at best and Winona could only hope that she would be able to stay out of trouble herself. There was no light at the end of the tunnel at all, Winona realized as tears streamed down her face. How did things go so wrong so quickly?

Outside of the patrol car, a police officer was making notes for the investigation report before presenting it to Liam for his signature as a primary witness.

“If I may ask, how did Ms. Jackson injure her head?” the officer asked.

Anthony Crawford was quick to answer him. “There was a small scuffle that broke out just now, when Ms. Jackson threatened to commit suicide along with her child. Liam had no choice but to subdue her.”

The officer nodded as he took down his notes. “What did he use to hit her with? Don’t worry, things like this happen all the time. It’s just standard procedure for us to record down all the necessary details.”

Anthony nodded in understanding. “It was a spatula.”

“A... spatula?” the police officer repeated after Anthony, just to confirm he did not hear wrongly.

“Where is this spatula now?”

Without a word, Liam walked over to where the spatula was lying on the ground and picked it up. The officer’s eyes widened in shock. “Are... are you sure that was the weapon, sir?” That tiny little children’s toy managed to bust Winona’s head open?

“Yes, it was,” Liam’s voice was firm.

The officer had no choice but to write his report as per Liam and Anthony’s statements. He then put the spatula into an evidence bag and sealed it up before the police squad left the scene.

Lilly pursed her lips in silence and stared at the police car that drove further and further away. Her little spatula went to jail!

Chapter 42 Teach Me Something Lawful, Please

Levitating in a corner, Pablo followed Lilly's line of vision and said, "Come on. It's just a spatula. So what if they don't take it away? It's dirty and nasty now."

Lilly pursed her lips. Fine...

I'm sorry, spatula...

She did not mean to ditch it.

The Crawfords mistook the bleakness on Sweet Pea's face as grief.

It was not a pleasant experience for a child to witness a blatant kidnapping. Hannah had been taken to rest just now.

"Are you alright, Lilly?" Feeling sorry, Bettany held Lilly.

Lilly shook her head. "It's okay. Hm... Out with the old and in with the new."

The Crawfords were at a loss for words.

Liam burst into laughter.

There would not be someone new. That was it for him.

With the matter finally put to rest, Liam felt relieved. It was a feeling away from anxiety and distress like never before.

"Come on, Lilly. Let's get you something to eat."

The gentle sway of the shadows among the trees went unnoticed. A dark silhouette rustled along the grass, lifting its head to reveal a face full of blood...

It reached its hand out in the Crawfords' direction, making a grabbing gesture. Eerie blue-violet veins were popping out of its hand...

...

This was the Crawfords' first camping trip with the whole family. Hugh did not want the special family moment to be ruined by Winona.

"What do you want to eat? I'll make it for you."

Wearing an apron, Bryson held a plate up and tenderly ran his fingers along Lilly's hair.

Lilly gulped at the smell of barbecue. Still, her enthusiasm was reflected in her sparkling eyes.

"So I can have anything? Even barbecue?" She asked.

Bryson curled his lips. "Yes, anything."

After a word with Liam, Bettany wheeled herself over and said, "You can only have a skewer. Too much barbecue isn't good for you."

Lilly's face fell. "Alright..."

She longingly glanced at the barbecue grill.

There were chicken, sausages, and shrimp on the grill.

Not to mention, steaks and lamb chops too...

“Goodbye, chicken.” Lilly bade the meat farewell.

“Goodbye, shrimp.”

“Goodbye, grilled meat.”

The pitiful look on her face amused and stumped everybody.

Bryson tenderly uttered, “Mom, just let her eat. Gilbert’s here if she eats her way to a bellyache.”

The mention of Gilbert triggered Polly into shaking its head and cawing, “Gilbert, Gilbert, pinked in the behind!”

On his way to the riverbank to collect his fishing rod, Gilbert slipped and fell on the grass.

His bottom was pink for sure.

Speechless, he shot an angry look at the parrot.

The parrot flapped its wings, “Run, run, as fast as you can!”

Lilly immediately ran with the parrot amid the chuckles.

It did not take long for the child to turn her frown upside down.

The little girl raced ahead the luscious field while the parrot chased after her, squawking behind.

Drake and Josh were reading in the tent while Zachary was lying on the air mattress on his phone.

Zachary was so immersed in the game that he was yelling profanities.

There was not a sound coming from Hannah though. She nestled and was asleep on her air mattress either from crying her eyes out or recovering from the shock.

The beautiful and homely moment took everybody away from the earlier nasty experience.

Tina soon arrived.

“A strawberry cake for you, Lilly!” Tina appeared harmless. “My mom made it. It’s tasty and better than the ones sold in cake shops.”

Since her family saw the whole thing unfold, Tina’s mom told Tina to deliver the cake and get some inside scoop.

Tina smiled sweetly. No one could resist her charms in this world.

Plus, she doubted any child would say no to a strawberry cake.

To her surprise, Lilly turned her head away. “I don’t want it.”

Tina thought Lilly was rude to put her in a spot.

Biting her lip, Tina looked hurt. "Lilly, don't you like me?"

Lilly looked her in the eye and nodded firmly. "That's right."

Did she not make it clear before?

Why did it not register in Tina's head?

Tina had not faced such a blatant rejection.

Her eyes welled up as if Lilly had done her injustice.

Pursing her lips, Lilly made a run for it.

Tina did not even have a chance to play the victim as her sobs had not been released. Rage overtook her!

...

Lilly ran to Bettany and sprawled on the grass.

Bettany smiled and said, "Don't lie on the ground, Lilly. It's cold."

She then got the air mattress sent over. Lilly crawled onto the mattress like a caterpillar.

Bettany uttered, "Stay there. I'll bring you some food."

Grandmothers always made sure their grandchildren never go hungry.

Believing that Lilly must be hungry after running around, Bettany went to grab the little girl some food.

There was Pablo's chance. He levitated near Lilly.

"Lesson time, Tulip!"

Lilly quickly covered her ears.

Pablo did not know when to quit. He wanted to impart knowledge to her every chance he got.

Nothing Pablo said made sense to Lilly. It was something about the fundamentals.

Still, her hands over her ears did nothing to stop Pablo's nagging.

"I'm going to talk to you today about the five practices of spiritualism.

"They are cultivation, medicine, destiny, prophecy, and observation.

"We can include the training of the mind and body, spells, incantations, and battle strategies into cultivation.

"It's not hard to get the concept of medicine. It's anything to do with medicine, healing, and even witches' brew."

Lilly perked her ears. "Witches? Do I have to perform a chant or a dance to make potions?"

Pablo was speechless.

“Where did you get that from?”

Lilly shook her arms in the air. “I don’t want to learn that! People will take me away!”

She went on an outing with her father once and stumbled upon a lunatic who said she was a witch. She was dancing and praying to the gods for rain.

The woman looked like she was having a seizure. In the end, she was taken away.

Lost for words, Pablo said, “That sort of movement calls a lot of unwanted attention, but it only takes the snap of the fingers for the advanced spells...”

“Never mind that. I will show you when it’s time to learn that. Next.”

Lilly was puzzled.

A huge question mark was written all over her face.

Pablo added, “All you need to know is that you can treat your grandmother’s illness with those powers.”

Lilly sat upright like an attentive student right away.

She got to help Granny!

Mommy told her to take good care of Granny.

That was why she must learn the spell and save Granny!

Lilly was finally on her best behavior.

Pablo curled his lips. Now I got your attention.

“By destiny, it means numerology, horoscope, fortune-telling. Prophecy involves dream interpretation...”

Lilly raised her hand. “Fortune-telling and dream interpretation? I know. I was caught by the police officer too.”

It was also during the same outing with her father. A blind man wanted to read her fortune.

However, the blind man made a quick exit when the police officer showed up.

She looked conflicted. “Master, can we learn something that won’t get me taken away?”

Pablo was at a loss for words.

Where did Stephen take her? The place seemed to be ridden with all kinds of people.

“Lilly, where did you and your father go?”

Lilly tilted her head to one side. “I don’t know. Daddy said that he was going to get cigarettes. He told me to stay put and wait for him.

"I waited and waited, but he didn't come back. It was dark. The police officer had to take me home in the end."

Pablo was speechless.

He wiped off the nonchalance on his face.

Oh, I got it. Stephen wasn't taking her out for an outing.

He was trying to dump her somewhere.

Chapter 43 Teach Me Something Decent, Please

Pablo smirked and speechlessly asked, "Did you really stay there and wait the whole time?"

Lilly bobbed her head. "Yeah."

She was a good girl and stood on the boxy bricked floor without wandering off.

Nevertheless, Daddy had forgotten about her in the end...

With the smile on her face fading, Lilly softly asked, "Daddy was trying to get rid of me, right?"

She knew the moment Daddy walked around without looking back that she was ditched.

Daddy did not want her anymore.

She stood there for a long time. Although there were people all around, Lilly had no idea where to go.

Pablo had no words.

Heh... She's a fool.

"Next time, just write the person out of your life if they don't want you. Tulip, just keep in mind that the people who abandon you don't deserve forgiveness. He isn't worth your tears."

Lilly innocently nodded her head, and a smile soon lit her face.

The child's emotions were like temperamental weather.

Maybe Lilly was stronger than before. She had the love of her uncles and grandparents, so the hurt and pain in the past did not matter anymore.

"Master, please teach me medicine! I know doctors don't get taken away. They even go on TV."

Pablo had a facepalm moment. Did everything to her involve getting taken away?

"Go on TV?" He casually remarked.

Lilly immediately imitated an advertisement she had seen on TV.

"After careful consideration, I made an unthinkable decision. I plan to reveal the secret of my family..."

"I am the descendant of the miracle healer, the great-grandson of a famous doctor. I hold the key to my single family secret that could heal and cure everything and anything.

"Here I have a drug that does wonders to your headache, toothache, backache, leg ache, indigestion, stomachache, loss of appetite, chesty cough, asthma, kidney failure, and impotence. You name it, I got the drug for it."

Pablo had no words, to say the least.

Lilly asked, "Isn't it awesome? It was on TV. By the way, what's impotence?"

Speechless, Pablo made something up. "Impotence is when you can't get up in the morning."

Lilly had an aha moment.

She got it. The drug must be an extra something to help people get up in the morning.

"That's awesome!" Lilly gave a look of aspiration.

Pablo was at a loss for words.

What's with that look on your face? What do you know?

He remarked, "Yeah, right. Do you know these people will be put away too?"

Lilly was dumbstruck.

Huh?

Was this a cause to be locked up too?

What was Pablo trying to teach her? Why was everything a reason to be taken away?

Nevertheless, she was ready to do it... for Granny!

Pablo could already tell by the look on her face what was going through her head.

He gave up on explaining further.

"Talking about medicine, the practice goes way back..." Pablo started his lesson.

Lilly listened intently as Pablo blabbered on.

He cocked his head back to find Lilly asleep.

"Snore... Snore..."

Pablo was lost for words.

He was talking to himself the whole time.

Sitting not too far away, Bettany cheerfully took in the scenery and looked at Lilly.

The little sweetheart chatted with the parrot for a long time until she dozed off.

Feeling for the young child, she whispered and got someone to carry Lilly into the tent.

Gilbert tiptoed his way over and asked in disbelief, "Is she asleep?"

The girl had a lot of fun. She was so alive and bubbly a moment ago, and now she was out.

Bettany said with a smile, "She must be tired from all that running around."

On the other corner, Hannah was watching the barbecue grill with her father, Liam.

She kept her eyes on the chicken wings the whole time. Zachary picked his head up from his game and teased, "Haven't you had enough? I have played five rounds now, and you're still eating."

Hannah scoffed. "None of your business!"

With the chicken wings ready, Hannah immediately grabbed one.

Liam furrowed his brows. "Don't eat too much."

Hannah turned her head away. "No, I'm not."

She then noticed Gilbert carrying the sleeping beauty over.

Feeling a little upset, Hannah quietly watched the grill and got first dibs on two skewers of each variety.

Lilly had no idea how long she was in dreamland.

The sun was setting by the time she got up in a haze.

A skewer was stuck up her face.

Hannah said, "Here you go."

Lilly lifted her chin in surprise before happily taking the skewer.

"Thank you, Hannah." Lilly was barely audible with food in her mouth.

Hannah frowned. "I didn't keep the food for you. I just couldn't finish it."

Lilly bobbed her head. "Sure, sure."

Hannah ran off. At a closer inspection, the girl seemed to be in a better mood than before.

On a nearby field, Cheryl was drawing on an easel.

She had been letting her creative juice flow for nearly the whole day.

Cheryl watched enviously as Lilly and Hannah let go of their inhibition and enjoyed skewers not too far away.

They were all young children. However, why did Lilly and Hannah get to have so much fun?

These kids had no ambition...

Tina had a tray in her hands. There was a big bowl of salad on the tray.

She said, "Cheryl, come with me to deliver this?"

Putting down her pencil, Cheryl looked docile, "Sure."

They were going to where the Crawfords were.

Cheryl made an innocent and curious face. "What's this, Mom?"

Tina replied, "Waldorf salad."

With her eyes widening, Cheryl asked naively, "Waldorf salad? Like the hotel?"

Tina laughed, thinking her daughter was the most adorable little thing.

Without lifting his head, Zachary sneered. "What's with the act? It makes me sick."

He was not loud, but the volume was enough for Cheryl to pick up on it.

Cheryl was embarrassed... She... She was not putting on any act...

"Mommy..."

Paying Cheryl no heed, Tina talked to the Crawfords with zeal, "Hello, Hugh! I made some salad. I added some nuts for a good crunch. I thought it would go perfectly with your barbecue."

Hugh offhandedly replied, "Thanks, but we're fine."

Tina answered with a smile, "I noticed the kids had a lot of meat. They should add some greens for a balanced meal."

She then turned her attention to Cheryl. "Cheryl, bring some to Hannah and Lilly."

Cheryl responded favorably and put some salad on two plates. Acting like a caring sister, she uttered, "Lilly, Hannah. I got some for you."

She showed her sensible side.

Bettany watched on, tempted to roll her eyes.

The child took after her mother's manipulative traits.

"Mrs. Miller, we appreciate it, but Bryson made vegetables and a healthy dessert. We're good."

Not taking the hint, Tina giggled and said, "It's okay. I already brought it over, so I'll just leave it here. You can eat it anytime you want."

While the adults were talking, Cheryl carried a plate of salad to Lilly who was devouring the meat skewers.

"Here you go, Lilly." Cheryl smiled sweetly.

Lilly stopped eating and shook her head. She said, "I don't want it."

She then grabbed a tissue to wipe her mouth before getting up to go to Bettany.

Out of the blue, Cheryl let out a cry and tumbled onto the ground. The plate of salad fell onto herself.

Lilly was stunned.

Everybody turned their heads to the source of the noise.

With her eyes welling up, Cheryl remarked in distress, "Why did you push me, Lilly..."

Lilly was confused.

Chapter 44 Teach You Manners

Pursing her lips, Lilly stared at Cheryl.

Although Cheryl looked nothing like her stepmother, the expression on the girl's face was all too familiar to Lilly.

That was the trick her stepmother always pulled, and her daddy would turn around and give Lilly a piece of his mind.

Even though Lilly did nothing to deserve any of that!

Lilly was forthright with her answer. "I didn't push you. You fell on your own."

Biting her lip, Cheryl wiped her eyes in distress. After giving her eyes a good rub, she said, "Yeah, I know you didn't mean to. It was my fault..."

Lilly pressed her lips together.

Other children might be dumbfounded in Lilly's shoes, not understanding what was going on.

However, Lilly had been in this position far too many times.

She turned to Bettany and uttered, "Granny, I didn't push her. I was getting up after finishing the food, and Cheryl suddenly fell."

Bettany picked Lilly up and gave an affirmative answer, "It's okay. I trust you didn't push anybody. Maybe somebody can't tell the difference between intentional and accidental."

She made a point to look at Cheryl.

Lilly blinked her eyes and fell into thought.

Tina awkwardly jumped in, "The kids were just fooling around. I should have paid closer attention..."

She tried to cover up the whole thing as harmless horsing around between children.

Nevertheless, the Crawfords were not going to let it go.

Bettany callously said, "So? What are you trying to say? Are you expecting our darling to apologize to you?"

“Or are you trying to give us the wrong idea about Lilly? What? So we would think she is bad and Cheryl is good? You are foolish to flatter yourself.”

The family ignored their child and took someone else’s child under their wing. Now, they had the nerve to point fingers at Lilly.

Bettany did not hold back with her choice of words.

Color washed off Tina’s complexion... That was not the end of it. The other Crawford family members chimed in to give their two cents.

Anthony curtly snapped, “The last person to frame Lilly is still sitting in jail.”

Hugh had a deadpan look. “It’s the parents’ duty to educate their children. It’ll be too late if you don’t start now.”

Gilbert faintly uttered, “What are you thinking to pull this sort of stunt? Don’t you think it’s embarrassing?”

The Crawford family took turns jumping down Tina’s throat.

Tina wished the earth could swallow her up.

The Crawfords really got up in her face.

She could admit that Cheryl screwed up by trying too hard to get people to like her.

Still, Cheryl was young and only meant well. The Crawford family should not rip into them.

Tina forced a smile. “I’m sorry, Bettany! I’m sorry, Mr. Anthony... Let us take it easy... Just take it easy...”

With tears streaming down her face, Cheryl choked with sobs.

“Sob, sob... It’s my fault... It’s my fault either way... Don’t be mad, Grandma Bettany.”

She wept in sniffles, trying to stop herself from crying out loud. Yet, she was sensible enough to apologize.

Cheryl appeared so miserable. She had the look that no one would have the heart to put the blame on her.

However, the whole thing did not sit well with the Crawfords.

What did Cheryl mean by either way?

She was dragging Lilly down in her apologies.

Just then, Lilly approached with a plate of salad in hand and cautiously made her way to Cheryl.

The Crawford family had mixed feelings about it because they thought Lilly was so nice to try and resolve things with Cheryl.

Seeing an out, Tina jumped in, “Oh, Miss Lilly. That isn’t necessary...”

Cheryl wiped away her tears and magnanimously uttered, “It’s okay, Lilly...”

Lilly dumped the whole plate of salad all over Cheryl.

Her red bracelet twinkled a flashing scarlet glint as the salad was tossed onto Cheryl's face...

That sure stopped Cheryl from talking.

Hung on the details, Lilly said, "Here you go. That's intentional! The one before was accidental.

"Now can you differentiate between intentional and accidental?"

So it turned out Lilly took everything Bettany said to heart.

That was why Lilly felt the need to explain herself.

Pablo often said that it was easier to remember things when put into practice.

Cheryl was dumbfounded.

She only poured salad on the hem of her skirt just now, so it was nothing.

Now, her outfit was drenched in salad dressing. She had never been so humiliated.

Cheryl lost it. "How can you do this to me?"

Still holding the plate in her hands, Lilly innocently blinked her eyes. "I was only teaching you."

The Crawfords were dumbstruck.

The little sweet pea appeared earnest with her bright eyes as she genuinely explained to Cheryl the difference between intentional and accidental.

Sure, they were flabbergasted, but... but...

The family had to say that Lilly could not have done a better job.

Bettany had a smile on her face. That was a good thing about being kids. They were free to do whatever was on their minds.

Nothing held them back!

That was how it should be with the young heiress of the Crawford family.

Tina cleaned off the residue from Cheryl's face and skirt. Feeling attacked, Cheryl burst out wailing.

She accused Lilly amid the cries, "How can you do this to me? You can't do this even if you're trying to teach me... Wahhhh!"

Lilly could tell Cheryl was crying for real this time. The girl was sad and miserable.

She said, "I'm sorry!"

Nevertheless, Lilly still did not believe she was at fault.

She trusted Cheryl could now distinguish between intentional and accidental.

Now that Lilly had apologized, Tina could no longer point fingers.

Despite feeling infuriated, Tina had to force a smile and pat Cheryl on the back. She said, "It's okay. You know kids. You fight today, but tomorrow you're back to being best friends."

Lilly hesitated for a bit before saying, "No, I don't want to be friends with her tomorrow either."

Tina was at a loss for words.

With a stiff smile, she turned to Bettany. "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I'll take Cheryl to get a change of clothes."

Taking Cheryl with her, Tina hurried along.

They came with such graces moments ago, and now they were leaving in a haste.

Cheryl clenched her fists. All she felt was further hatred for Lilly after the latter wrecked her winning streak over and over again.

Lilly glanced at Tina's receding figure before moving her gaze to Bettany...

She whispered, "Granny, I honestly don't want to be friends with Cheryl."

Lilly was uncertain whether she would cause Granny problems by doing so.

Holding Lilly's hand, Bettany gave her assurance. "You don't have to be friends if you don't want to. We don't need to force ourselves to make other people happy. You did great today, Lilly."

Lilly's eyes were sparkling. Joyful, she put her arms around Bettany and gave her the biggest kiss.

The sweet pea mewed, "Thank you, Granny!"

Bettany's heart could melt. All she wanted to do was give the girl all the love in the world.

"Come on. I'll take you to pick some raspberries." Embracing her inner child, the old lady gleefully chirped.

The Crawfords were relieved by the heartwarming scene.

Since Jean went missing, Bettany could not eat or sleep. Depression nearly took her life.

A healthy pink returned to Bettany's complexion not long after Lilly entered into the family's lives.

With the adult and child in high spirits, no one wanted to ruin the moment for them.

Lilly followed Bettany into the woods and curiously asked, "What are raspberries, Granny?"

Bettany gleefully replied, "They are wild berries. I used to pick them to eat in the countryside when I was little. They're sweet."

It got Lilly's attention at the mention that raspberries were sweet.

"Come on, Granny. Let's hurry."

Lilly dragged Bettany by the hand before realizing she should not do that. Lilly ran to the back of Bettany and pushed her wheelchair.

Bettany burst into chuckles.

It was a shame that she could not stand on her feet. Otherwise, it would be great to run in the fields with Lilly...

Lilly wheeled Bettany to the edge of the woods.

"Where are the raspberries, Granny?" Lilly looked around.

Bettany pointed at the shrub up ahead. "Raspberries are usually found among the shrubs. Let's look around."

Flying ahead of the group, Polly turned around and dove right into Lilly's arms.

"Ghost! Ghost!"

The parrot cawed while flapping its wings in a fluster.

The sun had set at the peak of the mountain, and the temperature dropped in the great outdoors, turning the scenery rather cold and grim...

For some reason, Bettany's stomach dropped.

Chapter 45 Carrying a Ghost Back

Bettany made a decision there and then to skedaddle. "Let's head back, Lilly."

The mention of a ghost did not scare Lilly.

That was great. Pablo was most keen when it came to ghosts.

With Pablo levitating away, Lilly ran and chased after him. She said, "Be good, Granny. Just wait for me here."

Bettany was not having it.

"Lilly!" Anxious, Bettany tried to keep up as she whipped out her phone to give Anthony a call.

By the time they passed the tree line, darkness had overtaken the sky.

Bettany could see Lilly ahead a moment ago, but Lilly quickly disappeared in the blink of an eye.

With an unknown bird hooted and flew by the deserted woods, Bettany was left alone, scared, and on the verge of tears.

"Lilly! Lilly!"

Bettany called out.

Following the sudden rustle among the bushes, Bettany nervously looked around and saw Lilly carrying a ghost on her back.

The ghost was covered in blood. Its drooping arms were black.

Its clothes were wet, and its hair draped over its face.

As a matter of fact, Lilly did not have a hard time piggybacking the ghost. That was why all Bettany saw was a ghost floating behind Lilly.

The thing that popped into Bettany's head was a ghost haunting Lilly.

"Lilly..." Bettany put her hand on her chest. The quiver in her voice did not go unnoticed.

Lilly picked her head up in a daze, only realizing now that Bettany came along too. The old lady looked frightened.

She immediately ditched the ghost. Wham. The ghost fell onto the ground and let out a grunt...

That was the least of Lilly's worries as she ran over to give Bettany a hug.

Thinking Lilly was scared, Bettany wanted to offer solace only to find the little girl comforting her instead.

"There, there, Granny. Don't be scared.

"I'm here."

Bettany was at a loss for words.

She did not feel much at first, but Lilly's gesture made her eyes well up.

"Don't abandon me, Lilly." Bettany sobbed while holding Lilly.

The fear of losing Lilly finally sank in.

Blaming herself, Lilly gently patted Bettany's back. "My bad. I'm sorry, Granny..."

She promised Mom to take good care of Granny. Yet, she ditched Granny just now.

Sob, sob. Lilly did not want to be an irresponsible kid.

Anthony rushed to the scene to find the adult and child locking arms and crying away.

He was speechless.

"What's going on?" Anthony went up to them and spotted the ghost not too far away. He immediately stood before Bettany and Lilly in defense.

The other family members soon arrived.

Hunkering down on a nearby tree branch, the parrot flapped its wings and cawed, "My, oh, my. It's a ghost! Check it now!"

Anthony had no words.

Narrowing his eyes, Anthony drew close and tipped the ghost with his toes to turn it over.

It turned out to be a child instead of a ghost.

"It's a boy," Anthony said. "No need to be alarmed."

Holding Lilly by the hand, Bettany asked, "A boy? Is he dead?"

Lilly shook her head. "No."

She initially thought it was a ghost too, but she realized it was a boy upon closer inspection.

Pablo mentioned something about saving a life as a doorway to never-never land. While she carried him out of there, she managed to frighten her granny.

Anthony got down and felt the boy's pulse before uttering, "He's not dead."

Edward furrowed his brows. "Why is there a child in the middle of the woods?"

The Crawford brothers examined the child on the ground. Since the boy was still breathing, it was the family's duty to give him a fighting chance to live.

Gilbert went up to examine his breathing and heartbeat while Edward called the police and ambulance.

Levitating in a corner, Pablo appeared quite delighted.

"See. I taught you about medicine this morning, and here you have a practice case," He said. "He lost a piece of his soul. It's a classic scenario. I'll show you what you can do."

Lilly nodded her head. "Sure. Saving a life is a doorway to never-never land."

Pablo was speechless.

Saving a life is a doorway to heaven, not never-never land.

Nevertheless, it amused Pablo that the little girl appeared conflicted. He decided against correcting her.

Unable to offer assistance, Bettany was dumbfounded. "...Huh? What never-never?"

It was hard for Lilly to wrap her head around it.

Back when she was with the Hatcher, Lilly was not exposed to anything about saving lives or spiritualism for that matter.

She could not quite figure out why saving a life could take her to never-never land.

"Granny, what's a doorway?"

Bettany dug into her mind for simpler words. "Huh... It means a path or a way to something."

It was not easy to explain...

Finally getting it, Lilly pursued with further questions. "What's never-never land?"

Why was saving a life leading a path to never-never land?"

Hiding her chuckles, Bettany replied, "It's heaven, not never-never land."

Lilly corrected herself. "Heaven."

Bettany earnestly taught the child.

Lilly listened intently.

In the end, the girl got it straight that saving a life was a gateway to heaven. She turned around and rolled her eyes at Pablo.

Catching her master in stitches, Lilly found out that Pablo did it on purpose.

Hmph! Pablo was such a meanie!

Just then, Gilbert said, "Alright. Let's bring him back with us."

Lilly inquired, "Is he alive?"

Gilbert carried the boy and uttered, "He's unconscious, but his breathing is stable."

The group headed toward the tent to wait for the police and ambulance. As medically skilled as Gilbert could be, he could not possibly examine the boy for internal injuries in the middle of nowhere.

With the sky getting dark, Cheryl's family took notice of the Crawfords carrying something from afar. They thought it was strange that the Crawford family was finding their way back with torchlights.

"What's that..." Tina murmured.

Thomas remarked, "I think it's a child."

"Huh?" Unable to see Lilly who was sitting on Bettany's lap in the dark, Tina asked, "Don't tell me something happened to Lilly."

If that were the case... The brat got it coming.

Hit by an idea, Tina said, "I'll go and check it out."

Thomas stopped her. "Didn't you cause enough problems? I'll go. You two stay here."

Either way, they had to see if anything happened to the Crawfords' golden child.

Thomas went over.

Cheryl craned her neck, but there was no way she could get a better look if Tina could not see at her height. Still, the prospect that Lilly possibly met with an accident excited Cheryl.

She made a worried face though. "Mommy, will Lilly be alright?"

Tina answered, "She should be okay..."

Time went by until Thomas hurried back.

He whispered, "It's not Lilly. It's a boy. The boy is wearing the Sdnchv label."

Tina was surprised. "Sdnchv? Could that child be a member of the Shaw family..."

Sdnchv was not a clothing label available to the public anymore, only focusing its business on wealthy and powerful families.

The label serviced foreign blue blood and the three local families – the Crawfords, the Shaws, and the MacNeils.

Since the Crawfords' kids were accounted for, and the MacNeils had no young children in the family, it could only mean that the child belonged to the Shaw family...

The couple exchanged glances, seeing the feverishness in each other's eyes.

There had been news reports that the young heir of the Shaw family was kidnapped.

The Shaws had been unlucky with the search. Should the Millers report to the Shaw that they found the heir...

Posted by **AdminD**, 138 Views, Released on June 15, 2023

Chapter 46 The Young Heir of the Shaws

Tina said, "We should contact the Shaws right now and tell them we found the heir."

Thomas retorted, "Are you stupid? Are you trying to take credit from the Crawfords?"

The Crawford family came across the boy. Who were the Millers trying to fool by taking credit for it?

Tina anxiously uttered, "What do we do?"

The Shaws and Crawfords were two of the three giants of Clodston. They were the movers and shakers of the city compared to the Millers...

Now that an opportunity to kiss up to the giants was presented before them, they did not want to lose out on it.

Thomas fell into deep ponder before exclaiming, "I got it!"

There was a telephone number making rounds in their community amid the search for the Shaw family's heir.

Thomas dialed the number and sounded concerned over the phone. "Hello, is this Mr. Shaw?"

"I'm Thomas Miller... Yes, yes. Here's the thing. The Crawford family's heiress stumbled upon your son while running around the fields. Mr. Anthony told me to call you..."

After Thomas hung up on the call, Tina showered her husband with compliments. "Wow, that was smart of you! You have a way with words, pleasing both families all at once."

Thomas was pleased with himself.

Through the examples of the adults around her, Cheryl believed she picked up on something...

...

Back in the Crawfords' tent, Gilbert cleaned the boy's face and changed his clothes. He finally had a good look at the boy's face.

Looking solemn, he pulled Anthony to a corner outside.

Lilly got down next to the air mattress and stared at the boy lying there.

Pablo was showing Lilly the trick to summon souls.

"His soul is not complete. While our souls remain within our bodies for the most part, a piece of our souls tends to wander off, so it's easy to lose it.

"The boy had a near-death experience, and now the piece of his soul is missing.

"Here. I'm going to teach you how to summon the soul back."

Lifting her chin, Lilly seemed to be missing the point as her attention was elsewhere.

"Master, why can't we chain the soul together if a piece of our souls tends to wander off?"

Pablo choked. He waved his arm and answered, "You'll understand with time."

Afraid of Lilly's millions of questions, he added.

"You need to memorize an incantation to summon lost souls. Also, you need to light a candle and let the fire burn the clothes of the person with the missing soul before reciting the incantation.

"Now repeat after me – Hear my pleas in the dark of the night, touch the spirit that's out of sight, however cold despite my plight, help my soul see the bright..."

Pablo recited the long line before asking Lilly, "Did you get that?"

Lilly gave a firm nod. "I got it!"

Pablo was impressed. The girl definitely had the talent...

"Now it's your turn," He said. "The incantation can be a little hard to remember..."

Lilly bobbed her head. "Here are my peas in the dark to bite, much the spirit that's tonight, however cod excite my fright, help myself see the kite..."

It was not difficult for Lilly.

Pablo was speechless.

?

What the hell?!

Sure, the intonation was there, but that was not it at all!

With that in mind, Pablo suddenly felt the rush of air circulation. Lilly's incantation was taking effect.

The corner of Pablo's lips was twitching.

Cocking her brows, Lilly asked, "Why do I have to eat peas at night? Why a cod? Why do I need to see a kite?"

Pablo had no words.

Nearby, Bettany overheard Lilly mumbling to herself, singing something about seeing a kite.

Her eyes reflected worry.

Lilly would often talk to herself or Polly.

She talked about a master on occasion...

For some reason, Bettany had a sinking feeling in her stomach.

Pulling herself together, she smiled and inquired, "What are you doing, Lilly?"

Lilly answered. "I'm trying to save the boy."

Bettany was dumbstruck. Instead of having her mind at ease, she grew concerned.

"Oh, Lilly. Can you tell me who you are talking to?"

A child could develop another personality after facing trauma at a young age and could see an imaginary friend. This was a mental illness.

Lilly nodded her head and replied, "I'm talking to Pablo."

Pablo chimed in. "Ahem... Lilly, didn't I tell you not to mention to others about me..."

Lilly appeared conflicted. "But Granny isn't someone else..."

With Lilly engaging in a monologue again, Bettany's heart sank to the pit of her stomach.

Poor Lilly. Did she really develop a mental illness?

"Oh, Lilly. You have me, your granddad, and uncles now... You're in a safe place..."

Bettany was heartbroken and worried. The family had prioritized Lilly's health examination recently, but they had left out checking on the girl's mental health.

She must let her boys know later.

Not only was she going to inform the boys, but Bettany also insisted on taking Lilly out of there.

Bettany suspected that the boy's bloodied state triggered unhappy memories in Lilly and caused her to hallucinate.

Lilly put up a fight. "Huh? Hold on, Granny. I'm still trying to save him."

She looked puzzled.

Everything was going well up until now. What had gotten into Granny?

Bettany uttered, "Don't worry, Lilly. Look, the doctors and police officers are here."

Lilly looked over and saw the police cars arriving with blinkers flashing. Other than that, a few black vehicles followed behind.

The Shaws were in these vehicles.

The Shaw family was desperate. Having been waiting by the road, Tina and Thomas exclaimed, "Here..."

The duo seemed eager as if they were in the rescue operation.

For some reason, the Shaws looked past them and headed straight to the Crawford family's tent.

Thomas and Tina looked embarrassed and humiliated.

Tina said, "Um... Why are they ignoring us..."

Thomas remarked, "They must be anxious. It's okay. We have a reason to check in on the Shaw family's young heir later."

"The Crawfords are there now, so we can't show our faces yet. We might get caught up in our lies."

The pair mumbled among themselves as they returned to their tent.

A poker-faced man, exuding a no-nonsense vibe, approached the Crawfords' tent.

Curious, Lilly stared at the incoming group.

She silently asked, "Master, why do they have a golden aura to them?"

The middle-aged man in the lead especially could blind her.

Pablo explained, "They had done a lot of good in their lives. They can be heroes who served their country."

With her query answered, Lilly pursued with another question. "Why is there death lingering amid the golden aura?"

Through Pablo's teachings, Lilly was able to identify death. Aunt Winona carried the stench of death because she had blood on her hands.

It was strange that the man was basking in a golden aura, but death drifted around him too.

Pablo answered, "He had killed others, but he only did it to the wicked."

That was why the aura of death could not get too close to the man. The golden aura shielded the man from death.

Lilly saw the light.

Now, she got it.

The man was one of the good guys, the type who got rid of bad guys.

Meanwhile, the middle-aged man drew close.

Colton Shaw's straight face often scared little kids. However, the little girl gave him the biggest smile rather than burst into tears.

"Hello, mister!" Lilly greeted him.

Colton paused.

The girl...

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Chapter 47 Somewhat Familiar Girl

Colton had never met a child who was not afraid of him and even smiled at him.

Somehow, he got the feeling that he had seen her somewhere before...

Snapping out of his thoughts, Colton gave a nod and replied, "Hello."

He paused before asking, "Were you the one who carried Ivan back?"

Lilly responded, "Yeah."

The little girl had rosy cheeks and baby fat. Her huge eyes were clear and bright. It was the cutest thing when she bobbed her head while talking.

Colton could not take his eyes away from her.

"Thank you. I'll drop by with Ivan soon to formally thank you." Although she was a child, Colton did not soften the tension along his facial lines.

The men in black behind him entered the tent and quickly carried the unconscious boy out.

Colton nodded at Anthony and was ready to leave when Lilly jumped in. "Mister, you can't leave..."

With Pablo guiding at the side, Lilly read after him, "He's got an unusual illness. You must come look for me if he doesn't wake up."

Colton nodded nonchalantly.

It was clear that he did not take her seriously.

She was simply a four-year-old. What could she do?

It was not like he could count on a girl to save Ivan if the professionals could not do anything.

Colton took Ivan along and left.

Watching as the fleet of cars drove away, Lilly could not wipe the worried look off her face.

Bettany said, "Alright. Let's head back."

The family intended to camp out overnight at the wetlands park so that Lilly could enjoy the camping trip, the night sky, and the morning dew.

After all that happened, Bettany felt like she was on an emotional roller coaster that she could not get out of. The thought that Ivan was kidnapped... It was better for the family to make haste home.

The Crawfords had a family meeting and decided to pack up and drive back to the Crawford Mansion overnight.

Lilly fell asleep on the road...

Meanwhile, Cheryl's family also collected their things and left once the Crawfords and Shaws were gone.

Tina looked envious. "Sigh. Did you see Lilly just now? Mr. Shaw smiled at her... I can't believe the girl's dumb luck. How she stumbled upon the unconscious boy is beyond me!"

Thomas chimed in, "Yeah! Unlike the Crawford family who has three boys, the Shaw family has no sons except Ivan... Jeez. Now, whoever Ivan has his eyes on in the future is lucky..."

Slumping against the child's seat, Cheryl pretended to be asleep as she paid attention to her parents' conversation.

She felt that the world was unfair. Why was Lady Luck always smiling at Lilly?

Cheryl would be blessed with good fortune too if she was born into the Crawford family.

Hmph! What was the big deal anyway?

...

Lilly fell into a deep sleep.

She dreamed about the ghost she carried back.

The ghost stared at her with a blank but bloody face.

Lilly jolted awake in a shudder.

She ran downstairs barefooted and shouted, "Granny!"

Fixating on Lilly's feet, Bettany said, "You're up, Lilly. Why aren't you wearing your shoes?"

Anthony was back at the office while Liam and Edward went to the police station to deal with the follow-up.

God knew where the others went as only Jonas sat at the dinner table in a casual T-shirt and jeans, sipping on coffee.

He took a glance at Lilly's bare feet and uttered, "Come here."

Lilly said hello before Jonas picked her up and put her down on the chair next to him.

She asked Bettany, "Granny, did the boy yesterday wake up yet?"

Bettany replied, "I don't know... Hang on. Let me make a phone call."

Lilly bobbed her head.

Leaning back against the chair, Jonas pushed his golden-framed glasses up and chuckled. "Are you so concerned about him, kiddo?"

Tch. The Crawford family had only reunited with the precious girl, and now a boy had stolen her heart?

Lilly looked at her uncle.

While Jonas was good-looking, he looked like a bad man when he smiled.

"Uncle Jonas, saving a life is a doorway to heaven, do you know that?" Lilly earnestly answered, applying her knowledge to real life.

She dreamed about the boy and wondered whether he was dead or alive...

Jonah roared in laughter before nonchalantly picking up the jug to pour Lilly a glass of milk.

He then slid a plate of breakfast across the table to Lilly.

"Eat."

His slender finger knocked against the table, hinting Lilly to pick up the pace.

With Lilly's tummy rumbling, she could feel the hunger. She picked up a toast and bit into it.

Bettany happened to return and said, "Oh, Lilly. I just called them and heard back that Ivan isn't awake yet."

The old lady sighed.

Not only was the boy still unconscious, but it was said that he also stopped breathing this morning. He was rushed to the emergency room...

...

On the top floor of a private hospital across the city, Colton stood outside the emergency room, pursing his lips as he looked outside the window.

Sitting next to him was a woman. The woman rose to her feet not too long later and paced around outside the emergency room.

She was Ivan's mother – Melody.

Colton paused before acting a little rusty in consoling her. "Don't worry. It's going to be okay."

Contrary to her name, Melody was hasty in nature. She peevishly snapped, "My son is in there. How can I not be worried?"

Colton had no words.

He quietly rubbed his nose.

Just then, the door of the operating theater flung open. The doctor walked out with a solemn look.

"Mr. and Mrs. Shaw, we have tried out best..."

With Melody going weak in the knees, Colton held her up and locked her in his arms.

Melody said in a trembling voice, "No way..."

The doctor shook his head. "You must prepare yourselves for the worst."

Ivan had suffered a loss of blood when he was sent to the hospital. They had given him blood.

However, for some reason, his vitals were stable, but his breathing grew weaker.

"We have run all the tests we could, but nothing abnormal showed up on the reports.... Ivan's turning blue in the face as if he's poisoned, but the test results indicated no toxins in his system.

"There is no explanation for his sudden weight loss. He came in last night, weighing 60 pounds, but now he's only 50 pounds heavy..."

The doctors scrambled their heads and could not figure out where the ten pounds in weight disappeared to.

It was a condition unseen and unheard of...

"I would suggest bringing Ivan home and making final arrangements so that he can live his last moments comfortably..."

It was the last thing the doctor would recommend as Colton may be an influential figure in Clodston. However, the doctor knew the child was beyond rescue.

Even God could not save him.

It was better for the boy to pass away at home than suffer in the hospital with tubes hanging out of him.

Tears streamed down Melody's face.

Colton pursed his lips as his mind harked back to Lilly's words.

He's got an unusual illness. You must come look for me if he doesn't wake up...

Having made up his mind, Colton uttered, "Come on. Let's take Ivan back."

Melody was devastated...

His black lips and sunken cheeks took the youth out of the seven-year-old child.

Melody choked with sobs. "Ivan, Mommy is taking you home."

If he could not be saved, so be it. The little man had tubes sticking out all over his body and lay alone on the operating table.

It was hard enough for the boy.

With the car driving off, Colton turned a corner and made his way toward the Crawfords' family home.

Melody held Ivan in anguish without paying attention to where the car was going.

A phone call came in, and Colton tapped the button to accept. Karen's exasperated voice came from the other end of the line.

"Where are you taking Ivan, Colt?"

Colton answered in a flat tone, "The doctor said that they can't help Ivan, so I'm taking him to the Crawfords."

He informed his mother about what Lilly said to him yesterday.

Karen was Ivan's grandmother and a rather superstitious old lady.

She was on the extreme end when it came to superstition as she could only dine at an auspicious time.

Nevertheless, Colton's reply only infuriated her further. "What's the point of seeking help from a little girl? What does she know? I found a practitioner, so come back now with Ivan!"

Colton scowled. Karen had sought many practitioners, but these people were later revealed to be shams.

He answered, "That won't be necessary."

Melody did not mean to eavesdrop, but Karen's loud voice could be heard from the phone.

"What do you mean it won't be necessary? I'm telling you to come home now! I have Master Sullivan here. Do you know who Master Sullivan is? He's not someone who can easily be invited. Master Sullivan has reached the pinnacle of spiritualism. Do you get it? You rather believe a little girl than a true practitioner."

Colton faintly responded, "I'm hanging up."

He then terminated the call.

Holding Ivan tightly in her arms, Melody asked, "Are we going to see Lilly?"

She had heard about the young heiress' union with the Crawfords.

Colton queried, "Do you trust the girl?"

If Melody gave a negative answer... Colton would turn the car around and take Ivan home.

To his surprise, Melody firmly replied, "I trust her."

This was because the girl carried the boy back.

Lilly also said to come to her before Ivan's health took a turn for the worst.

...

Meanwhile, Karen was fuming after the call.

"Master Sullivan, can you... come with me to the Crawfords' residence?"

Next to the old lady sat a practitioner with brows longer than his beard. He had his eyes closed for a rest.

He arrogantly uttered, "I don't usually interfere with the mortal world. I have already made an exception by coming here with you..."

Karen devoutly nodded her head. "Yes, I understand. It's all my ungrateful son's fault. I can't believe he's going to see a child."

She anxiously and helplessly relayed what Colton said before bringing up restoring Master Sullivan's shrine and doing good deeds to repay him.

Master Sullivan said, "Fine. It was fate that brought us together. I'll go with you and check out the kid who made these insensible notions."

Grateful for Master Sullivan's change of heart, Karen brought him to the Crawfords' residence.

...

After breakfast, Lilly looked out vacantly.

"Master, do you think the boy will be okay?"

She could not shake off the dream she had this morning. The ghost in the dream simply stared at her without a word.

Lilly believed that the ghost might really become a ghost if he died. For all she knew, he would come into her dreams every night to stare at her...

Pablo sat cross-legged in a corner, scribbling something in a notebook. He offhandedly remarked,

"Are you interested to find out? I can teach you to read his fortune."

"Do you remember what I taught you yesterday? The five practices of spiritualism – Cultivation, Medicine, Destiny, Prophecy, and Observation."

Lilly replied, "I do... I guess."

Pablo gave her a skeptical look.

She was snoozing away before he was even done talking yesterday. Remember, his *ss.

Pablo added, "Destiny is all about reading the stars and signs to deduce a person's fortune. Prophecy is the art of divination to infer the future..."

He took his time to impart the basics to Lilly, and Lilly listened intently. There was no telling whether Lilly got it though.

"Now, can you try and look into Ivan's future?"

Lilly immediately looked around.

Fortune-telling... Pendulum...

The little girl got these two things in her head.

With her eyes lighting up, she ran to the artificial pond and fished out a tortoise that was basking in the sun.

“Ha!”

Lilly hurled the tortoise onto the grass.

The tortoise tumbled and rolled around upside down before stopping.

The poor tortoise was puzzled.

Pablo was at a loss for words.

A pendulum or a dome-shaped item could be used for the art of divination, but nothing was said about using a tortoise, and a live one at it.

What was she doing?

Looking serious, Lilly kneeled before the tortoise. “Hm... Is that so...”

Pablo was speechless. “What do you mean?”

Lilly responded, “The boy isn’t dead, and he’s heading our way.

“There’s a scammer too... Oh, the poor boy! He might not make it...”

She was down on all fours and got to the tortoise’s eye level.

Putting up a struggle, the tortoise craned its neck and bit on the grass to flip itself over.

Lily exclaimed, “Ah! There will be a turn of events!”

Pablo had no words.

What the hell? Was that supposed to be an unexpected twist to the boy’s fate?

Pablo irritably did the math before shooting Lilly with a look of surprise.

Huh? It seemed to be the case.

Just then, the sound of a roaring engine came from outside the Crawford Mansion.

Getting up, Lilly dusted off her bottoms and ran out.

Hugh and Bettany’s voices echoed across the hall. “Mr. Shaw... How is Ivan doing?”

“Lilly is here. Margaret, please fetch Lilly for us...”

Lilly made haste. “Here I come, Granny!”

Bettany steadied the little girl. “Slow down. Why did you get here so quickly?”

Lilly turned her gaze to Colton and the woman next to him who was carrying Ivan.

“The tortoise told me that Ivan was coming, so I came running.”

Bettany and Hugh were confused. What tortoise?

The moment Melody laid eyes on Lilly, she felt like the girl was her lifeline.

“Lilly, please save Ivan...”

Nothing was more touching than the love of a parent. Melody was lost.

Ivan was motionless in her arms.

Lilly ran into the house, yelling, “Come in quickly!”

Colton took Colton and kept up with Lilly.

Bettany and Hugh followed behind.

Lilly went straight to the kitchen. Pablo said that she needed fire to summon the lost soul.

She also needed the boy’s clothes...

Margaret asked, “What are you looking for, Little Miss?”

Lilly answered, “I’m searching for a firepit, papers, and a piece of Ivan’s clothes...”

While talking, she took a glance at Ivan.

She realized she had a flame on top of his head.

Dumbstruck, Lilly quietly asked, “Master, what’s that on Ivan’s head?”

Pablo replied, “The flame on the head represents his life force. An incense will appear before a person’s death. The person will die once the fire reaches its end.”

He said while wincing his face.

The flame would not appear on those whose lives were in danger, yet it was not their time yet.

However, death was imminent when the incense showed up.

Was the kid not going to survive?

Chapter 48 Save Ivan

The boy was wheeled out of the operating theater.

His black lips and sunken cheeks took the youth out of the seven-year-old child.

Melody choked with sobs. “Ivan, Mommy is taking you home.”

If he could not be saved, so be it. The little man had tubes sticking out all over his body and lay alone on the operating table.

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She was on the extreme end when it came to superstition as she could only dine at an auspicious time.

Nevertheless, Colton's reply only infuriated her further. "What's the point of seeking help from a little girl? What does she know? I found a practitioner, so come back now with Ivan!"

Colton scowled. Karen had sought many practitioners, but these people were later revealed to be shams.

He answered, "That won't be necessary."

Melody did not mean to eavesdrop, but Karen's loud voice could be heard from the phone.

"What do you mean it won't be necessary? I'm telling you to come home now! I have Master Sullivan here. Do you know who Master Sullivan is? He's not someone who can easily be invited. Master Sullivan has reached the pinnacle of spiritualism. Do you get it? You rather believe a little girl than a true practitioner."

Colton faintly responded, "I'm hanging up."

He then terminated the call.

Holding Ivan tightly in her arms, Melody asked, "Are we going to see Lilly?"

She had heard about the young heiress' union with the Crawfords.

Colton queried, "Do you trust the girl?"

If Melody gave a negative answer... Colton would turn the car around and take Ivan home.

To his surprise, Melody firmly replied, "I trust her."

This was because the girl carried the boy back.

Lilly also said to come to her before Ivan's health took a turn for the worst.

...

Meanwhile, Karen was fuming after the call.

“Master Sullivan, can you... come with me to the Crawfords’ residence?”

Next to the old lady sat a practitioner with brows longer than his beard. He had his eyes closed for a rest.

He arrogantly uttered, “I don’t usually interfere with the mortal world. I have already made an exception by coming here with you...”

Karen devoutly nodded her head. “Yes, I understand. It’s all my ungrateful son’s fault. I can’t believe he’s going to see a child.”

She anxiously and helplessly relayed what Colton said before bringing up restoring Master Sullivan’s shrine and doing good deeds to repay him.

Master Sullivan said, “Fine. It was fate that brought us together. I’ll go with you and check out the kid who made these insensible notions.”

Grateful for Master Sullivan’s change of heart, Karen brought him to the Crawfords’ residence.

...

After breakfast, Lilly looked out vacantly.

“Master, do you think the boy will be okay?”

She could not shake off the dream she had this morning. The ghost in the dream simply stared at her without a word.

Lilly believed that the ghost might really become a ghost if he died. For all she knew, he would come into her dreams every night to stare at her...

Pablo sat cross-legged in a corner, scribbling something in a notebook. He offhandedly remarked,

“Are you interested to find out? I can teach you to read his fortune.

“Do you remember what I taught you yesterday? The five practices of spiritualism – Cultivation, Medicine, Destiny, Prophecy, and Observation.”

Lilly replied, “I do... I guess.”

Pablo gave her a skeptical look.

She was snoozing away before he was even done talking yesterday. Remember, his *ss.

Pablo added, “Destiny is all about reading the stars and signs to deduce a person’s fortune. Prophecy is the art of divination to infer the future...”

He took his time to impart the basics to Lilly, and Lilly listened intently. There was no telling whether Lilly got it though.

“Now, can you try and look into Ivan’s future?”

Lilly immediately looked around.

Fortune-telling... Pendulum...

The little girl got these two things in her head.

With her eyes lighting up, she ran to the artificial pond and fished out a tortoise that was basking in the sun.

“Ha!”

Lilly hurled the tortoise onto the grass.

The tortoise tumbled and rolled around upside down before stopping.

The poor tortoise was puzzled.

Pablo was at a loss for words.

A pendulum or a dome-shaped item could be used for the art of divination, but nothing was said about using a tortoise, and a live one at it.

What was she doing?

Looking serious, Lilly knelt before the tortoise. “Hm... Is that so...”

Pablo was speechless. “What do you mean?”

Lilly responded, “The boy isn’t dead, and he’s heading our way.

“There’s a scammer too... Oh, the poor boy! He might not make it...”

She was down on all fours and got to the tortoise’s eye level.

Putting up a struggle, the tortoise craned its neck and bit on the grass to flip itself over.

Lilly exclaimed, “Ah! There will be a turn of events!”

Pablo had no words.

What the hell? Was that supposed to be an unexpected twist to the boy’s fate?

Pablo irritably did the math before shooting Lilly with a look of surprise.

Huh? It seemed to be the case.

Just then, the sound of a roaring engine came from outside the Crawford Mansion.

Getting up, Lilly dusted off her bottoms and ran out.

Hugh and Bettany’s voices echoed across the hall. “Mr. Shaw... How is Ivan doing?”

“Lilly is here. Margaret, please fetch Lilly for us...”

Lilly made haste. "Here I come, Granny!"

Bettany steadied the little girl. "Slow down. Why did you get here so quickly?"

Lilly turned her gaze to Colton and the woman next to him who was carrying Ivan.

"The tortoise told me that Ivan was coming, so I came running."

Bettany and Hugh were confused. What tortoise?

The moment Melody laid eyes on Lilly, she felt like the girl was her lifeline.

"Lilly, please save Ivan..."

Nothing was more touching than the love of a parent. Melody was lost.

Ivan was motionless in her arms.

Lilly ran into the house, yelling, "Come in quickly!"

Colton took Colton and kept up with Lilly.

Bettany and Hugh followed behind.

Lilly went straight to the kitchen. Pablo said that she needed fire to summon the lost soul.

She also needed the boy's clothes...

Margaret asked, "What are you looking for, Little Miss?"

Lilly answered, "I'm searching for a firepit, papers, and a piece of Ivan's clothes..."

While talking, she took a glance at Ivan.

She realized she had a flame on top of his head.

Dumbstruck, Lilly quietly asked, "Master, what's that on Ivan's head?"

Pablo replied, "The flame on the head represents his life force. An incense will appear before a person's death. The person will die once the fire reaches its end."

He said while wincing his face.

The flame would not appear on those whose lives were in danger, yet it was not their time yet.

However, death was imminent when the incense showed up.

Was the kid not going to survive?

Chapter 49 No Faith in Her

While Lilly got information on the incense, she had no idea that the appearance of the flame on top of a head represented imminent death.

All she got from Pablo was that the person would die when the flame burned to the end of the incense.

Feeling that time was not on her side, Lilly urged the adults to hurry up. She needed to save Ivan before the incense on top of Ivan's head burned out.

The firepit and ritual paper were not a problem. The family owned a brazier and papers on which she could scribble sacred texts.

Nevertheless, Ivan's clothes proved a difficult feat.

It struck Melody that she had a shirt belonging to Ivan in the car. She ran off to retrieve it.

Now that everything was ready, Lilly burned the papers over the fire and lit a candle at the door.

A panting voice from the entrance intruded as Lilly was about to begin. "Stop!"

Karen arrived on the scene to find Ivan lying on the ground. Next to him, a girl was holding a bundle of papers. She freaked out.

"This is nonsense!"

Furious, Karen picked up her cane and smacked the ritual papers out of Lilly's hands.

It happened so quickly. Before everybody knew it, Karen was hitting the girl with a cane.

With the back of Lilly's hand taking the blow, she flinched in pain and dropped the papers to the ground.

Her hand turned red.

"Ugh..."

The pain drew tears out of the girl's eyes.

Well, the tortoise never foretold anything about this. Why was she struck?

Melody cried in panic and anger, "Mom! What are you doing?"

She charged in there and came in between Karen and Lilly.

Colton curtly blurted, "Get out!"

Karen was not having it.

Behind Karen, Anthony and the white-browed practitioners turned up.

Karen happened to run into Anthony who was on his way home. That was how she was able to gain access to the Crawfords' residence.

Anxious for her grandson, the old lady made a mad dash into the house despite being on a cane.

Since Master Sullivan fancied himself an unworldly being, he would not flounder around. Hence why he sauntered along with Anthony in the back.

Anthony scowled the moment Karen raised her cane at Lilly.

"Old Mrs. Shaw, I let you in because your grandson is here. I didn't let you enter our home to hit Lilly."

Karen was all about respecting elders. It did not sit well with her that someone younger like Anthony gave her a telling-off. Still, her focus was on Ivan, so she would pretend she did not hear that.

“Quick, Master Sullivan. Ivan is here!”

With a long face, Anthony asked Margaret to retrieve the first-aid kit.

Bettany flipped out.

So Karen was going to play the age card and act dumb, huh?

The Crawfords were not going to take this sitting down.

“Old hag! Apologize to Lilly now!” Bettany could play the old lady at her game too. She lifted her leg and kicked her loafer away.

Smack! It was a bull’s eye right on Karen’s face.

It never crossed Bettany’s mind that she got a good aim. She was stunned, to say the least.

Karen nearly lost it after being slapped in the face by a loafer. This was an emergency. Why were the Crawfords fussing over the littlest issue?

“You... Colt, take Ivan with you. We’re leaving now!”

It was not like she wanted to be at the Crawfords’ residence.

Karen would not be here if it were not for her grandson.

To her dismay, Colton grabbed Karen by the collar and dragged her out. He curtly uttered, “You go.”

Getting worked up, Karen took advantage of her position as a senior and lay on the ground. She shouted, “Fine! Fine! Come on. I’m not a mother to you if you kick me out!”

She kicked up a huge fuss!

Shaking his head, Master Sullivan made an enigmatic face and uttered, “It’s too late.”

Lilly held Ivan’s hand and said urgently, “Mister, it’ll be too late if we don’t save Ivan now.”

Master Sullivan frowned and glanced at Lilly.

The little phony psychic was copying him.

The little girl knew no shame to repeat after him.

Master Sullivan then moved his gaze to the brazier, the papers burning in the pit, and the shirt in her hand.

He scoffed.

Hearing that it was too late, Karen urged, “Please, Master Sullivan. Please... Save my grandson!”

Instead of using her age against the Crawfords like before, she showed nothing but sincerity toward the practitioner.

Despite Colton and Melody objecting, Karen threatened them with her life and held Colton and Melody down by their feet to buy time for Master Sullivan.

Master Sullivan sighed. "Seeing that you're in a spot... I'll help you. Sable!"

His disciple in the back answered and set up the ritual right away.

Karen was more than thankful. Finally, her grandson had a fighting chance to live.

Master Sullivan worked fast as though to psyche everybody out. A flame ignited at the wave of his arm, leading many to be awestruck.

He pulled out a brass bell and ritual blade before circling Ivan and spewing mumbo jumbo.

"Evil, begone. Demon, begone. I call upon the great forces to cleanse the evil in the child!"

Bang! Bang!

Master Sullivan's disciple beat on the drum.

Pablo was speechless.

He maintained composure though. Pablo stopped rushing Lilly because the incense on top of the boy's head was a timer, counting down to his death.

Lilly did not take her eyes away from Ivan.

The big hoo-ha cost Ivan time, and now two-thirds of the incense was burned through.

Livid, Lilly yelled, "He's a fake!"

The tortoise mentioned an obstacle. So this was the obstacle.

Karen's eyes popped open in anger. "What does a child know? Shut up!"

Master Sullivan was a trained professional.

There was no way the girl could save her grandson if Master Sullivan could do nothing.

Who did she think she was? How could someone of her age compare to a wise practitioner?

Master Sullivan callously uttered, "I'd advise you to speak not of blasphemy. The ritual is done. The boy will regain consciousness in no more than five minutes."

He put his hands behind his back, trying to portray an air of unworldliness.

Lilly remarked, "Ivan won't wake up. Whatever you did is pointless..."

Bettany did not want any part in it.

This was the Shaw's private family affair. Lilly had done enough for them.

"Let's go, Lilly. They can deal with it themselves."

The urgency of the matter stirred Lilly to tears.

The world of a child was full of innocence. It would take kids a long time to grieve over the death of an animal, much less a person.

Lilly looked at Melody and then at Colton.

Melody had nothing more to lose!

She picked Karen up from the ground and dragged her out.

Karen shot her mouth off, "How dare you! Is this how you treat your mother-in-law? As a daughter-in-law..."

Melody threw her out the door and angrily chided, "As a daughter-in-law, I have enough of you! I should put this out there. I call the shots for my son! I'll break your legs if you take another step closer!"

Karen was at a loss for words.

She huffed and puffed as anger nearly sucked the life out of her.

The rage and the hurt overwhelmed her every being.

That was her grandson in there too!

Karen only had her grandson's best interest at heart. Was she wrong for doing what was good for her grandson?

"Are you trying to get Ivan killed?" Karen wailed.

Inside, Colton shot a glare at Master Sullivan. "Either you leave, or I'll make you."

Master Sullivan made a wry face.

No one had ever shown him such disrespect since he attained the highest level of spiritualism. Oh, the nerve of the Shaws. Well, that was the last time he would ever help the family.

"Hmph!" With his reputation as someone on high at stake, Master Sullivan merely sneered without another word.

Karen cried in desperation, "Are you trying to get Ivan killed? You're killing my grandson..."

Colton indifferently said, "I trust Lilly can save Ivan."

Master Sullivan was tempted to roll his eyes. The Shaws were mad to put faith in a child.

Anthony looked at the time and faintly commented, "Your five minutes are up!"

Raising her brow, Bettany snapped a biting remark, "Didn't you say the boy will wake up in five minutes?"

Color drained from Master Sullivan's face...

A cry was heard in the back,

Lilly had somehow picked the ritual papers from the ground and set them ablaze.

While it was not quite as spectacular as Master Sullivan's performance, she managed to spark a green flame.

Once the fire was burning, Lilly threw Ivan's shirt into the brazier and earnestly chanted, "Peas in the dark to bite... help myself see the kite..."

Master Sullivan furrowed his brows. See the kite?

Was it all fun and games for the girl?

"Nonsense!" Keeping a straight face, Master Sullivan reprimanded the girl.

His pet peeve was people like Lilly who played pretend and cheated others.

Sable, the bitter disciple behind Master Sullivan, could not hold his tongue. "That's right! The ritual is a joke to her! What the hell is that? I'll eat sh*t upside down if she can revive Ivan. I'm talking about a massive turd!"

The shirt in the fire suddenly stood up on its own.

Master Sullivan froze while Sable's statement came to an abrupt end...

Chapter 50 Taking Someone's Credit

As green sparks flashed in the brazier, Ivan's shirt suddenly stood up straight, and his sleeves slowly lifted...

Dark clouds already obscured the sky as a gust of cold wind blew, causing Bettany to hug around her arms.

The scene before them was utterly chilling!

Only Lilly had a smile on her face as she waved at the shirt and said sweetly, "Return now!"

The shirt promptly fell back into the brazier and was lit on fire.

Ivan, lying on the ground, started moving his fingers ever so lightly.

Pablo let out a shocked cry and quickly took out his notebook and flipped the pages.

I didn't mistake it! An incense on the head represents a countdown toward their death. How did he resurrect?

Everyone held their breath and stared at Ivan briefly, but Ivan did not wake up.

Melody slumped onto the ground and cried silently.

Sable sighed and sneered. "See? I'm speechless that you all believed in a child. It's clearly a waste of time! If you would've let my master continue with his spells, he could've saved him!"

Master Sullivan scolded with a stern face, "Sable! Stop talking!"

Standing outside the door, Karen overheard Sable and burst into the room, crying, "It's your fault! This is what happens when you don't listen to me! You killed my grandson!"

As she screamed, she threw her walking cane at Lilly. "You pay for my grandson's life! You killed him! If he dies, then so should you!"

Lilly instinctively raised her leg and kicked the walking cane back with a thump. The walking cane immediately knocked Karen's head... and she cried and yelled louder.

Anthony's face turned gloomy, and he was about to have the bodyguards cast Karen out of the house!

Then, Colton shouted fiercely, "Shut up!"

Karen startled before crying louder. "You dare to raise your voice toward me! Oh, how terrible my life is! I've lost my grandson, and now my son is being disrespectful..."

Master Sullivan stood at the side while listening to the squabble and felt satisfied at heart!

This is what you get for not trusting me!

It's ridiculous to think that a mere child could save someone that even I can't save!

If word goes out that Lilly was the one who saved Ivan, it's going to look terrible for my image!

Suddenly, a weak voice sounded. "Keep it down..."

Master Sullivan's proud face immediately froze, and he looked to the side...

Ivan weakly propped up his body and sat up!

Lilly happily exclaimed, "You're alive!"

Wow, I actually saved him!

Lilly suddenly thought of how powerful her master was. Some of his teachings are useful, after all!

Melody was stunned. Her body trembled as she widened her eyes, fearing that it was her imagination...

"Ivan... Ivan!" In a shaky voice, Melody exclaimed and went forward to caress Ivan's face.

Ivan moved his head to the side. The boy was not fond of physical touch, even if it was from his own mother.

His calm expression gave him a cold yet adorable aura, similar to his father.

Ivan pursed his lips and looked around, finally locking his gaze on Lilly.

"Who are you?" He asked.

Lilly smiled widely. "I'm Lilly."

Ivan discreetly remembered her name from then on – Lilly.

Melody choked back on her tears as she thanked, "Lilly, thank you so much. Thank you..."

Karen also was brought back to her senses from the shock and crawled toward Ivan, trembling. "Oh, my grandson! Ivan, you're awake! Oh, it must be because you're blessed by the heavens..."

Upon hearing that, the Crawford family scoffed.

If her grandson dies, it's Lilly's fault; if he lives, it's because he's blessed!

Anthony ordered indifferently, "Jack, see them out."

Colton glanced at Karen before apologizing to Anthony, "My apologies. Once I leave, I shall take care of my family's business."

He kept his words short as he knew it would be useless to clarify further.

The Crawford family was already angered by his family's actions.

Colton was often working at the front line of battlefields and needed help paying attention to what was happening at home.

He was unaware that his mother would be such a troublesome person, and at the same time, he also thought of the times Melody gave him the cold shoulder, making him feel troubled.

"I shall visit your family another time to give my thanks!" Colton simply finished and turned to look at Lilly.

His gaze turned somewhat gentle as he patted her head.

"Lilly, if you need help, you can always find me." Colton paused before re-emphasizing his words, "Anything at all!"

Melody wiped her tears and added, "Thank you, Lilly..."

However, little did the child know she had accomplished something incredible and even got the favor of the Shaw family.

She was simply happy to help out as she waved her hands. "You don't have to thank me! Besides, saving one's life is better than building a seven-story tower!"

The little girl might not even understand the idiom's meaning, but her serious face was adorable!

Everyone could not help but laugh. Even Anthony, who had a stern face, softened at sight.

Colton then took his family and left.

Master Sullivan felt extremely embarrassed and was silent throughout.

Seeing the Shaw family leaving, they naturally wanted to go as well.

However, Lilly suddenly exclaimed, "I thought I heard someone say he will eat ten pounds of stinky..."

Sable was embarrassed, wishing he could find a hole to crawl into!

Master Sullivan's face darkened as he glared at Lilly and scolded, "You're quite unreasonable for someone so young. Do you think you're the one that saved Young Master Shaw? I advise you to exercise more virtue!"

He huffed and walked away, frustrated.

Lilly had a look of confusion after getting scolded.

But I saved him! Who said it was them?

Lilly finally understood why the police wanted to capture them.

Meanwhile, the sky gradually cleared up, and the cold atmosphere of the living room was already gone.

Anthony stared at Lilly with a worried look...

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Ivan was still weak, so Colton held him in one arm before putting him into the car.

Karen hurriedly pushed Melody to the side to catch up with them, but Colton unexpectedly slammed his hand against the car door while staring coldly at her.

"You look healthy, mother. Pack your belongings tomorrow and return home at once!"

Karen was taken aback.

Colton put his hand around Melody's waist and led her into the car before closing the door.

The car quickly drove away, leaving Karen, who was angrily glaring on the spot.

"What did I do wrong..." Karen was enraged, but upon seeing Master Sullivan standing behind her, she quickly said awkwardly, "Uh... I'm sorry that you've had to witness such a mess!"

Master Sullivan coldly replied, "It's nothing."

"Master Sullivan, please get in..." Karen motioned, but Master Sullivan refused, "No, thank you."

He then promptly walked out after replying.

Sable looked at Karen and said loudly, "Old Mrs. Shaw, how your family handled this is unforgivable! Do you think a brat from the Crawford family has the ability to save Young Master Shaw?"

Karen paused before asking, "What do you mean?"