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Adam frowned when he noticed that Lilin was no longer with him. “Where did Lilin go?”

Melinda snapped out of her senses and looked around, only to realize that their daughter was missing. “That can’t be! Lilin was just behind me!”

Having confirmed that Lilin was missing, Adam’s expression turned stern, and he swiftly ordered his subordinates, “What are you standing around for? Start searching for Lilin!” “Understood!” the subordinates replied in unison.

Just as they were about to split up and search for her, a young girl’s voice called out, “Don’t bother! I’m right here!”

Everyone looked in the direction of the voice and spotted a grown-up Lilin in sportswear. With her hands in her trouser pockets, she walked toward them at a leisurely pace while chewing her bubble gum.

Melinda pulled her daughter hastily. “Where have you been? Please don’t just wander off alone, especially since the airport is huge and you’re not familiar with the place at all!” “I went to the bathroom,” Lilin shrugged and replied nonchalantly.

Adam came over and chided, “Why didn’t you tell me or your mother? You should’ve at least told one of us that you were going to the bathroom. We thought you were lost!”¹ After chastising her, he glanced over to his subordinates and lambasted, “You idiots! Didn’t any of you notice that Lilin slipped away on her own?!”

The subordinates were intimidated by Adam’s rebuke and lowered their heads in silence.

Lilin, however, glanced exasperatedly at her irritable father and retorted, “Jeez, Dad, I didn’t get lost, did I? Why are you lashing out at them?”

Adam’s tone was noticeably gentler when speaking to his younger daughter.

“There’s no use telling them off only after you get lost! Don’t ever run off like that without telling US.” “Okay, Dad,” said Lilin nonchalantly. She did not seem to take her father’s warning very seriously, however. She was peeved by the sight of Sophia throwing herself into Adam’s arms, so she decided to distance herself from them for a while and keep Sophia out of sight.

She never liked her half-sister, Sophia, firstly because she believed that Sophia’s character was questionable, and secondly because of Sophia’s constant rudeness toward Melinda. Lilin decided to treat Sophia the same way that Melinda had been treated.

Lilin's safe return allowed Melinda to breathe a sigh of relief. She patted Lilin's shoulder gently and reminded, "You haven't said hi to Sophia yet! Go on!"

Lilin looked over and locked eyes with Sophia's somewhat unfriendly gaze. She knew that Sophia did not like her, but she had to maintain some decorum for the sake of her parents. She removed her hand from her pocket and waved at Sophia. "Hiya, Sis! It's been a while!"

Though Sophia was a little displeased at Lilin's unbecoming behavior, she reciprocated Lilin's greeting for the sake of her father. Lilin had already gotten on her nerves earlier when she saw how anxious Adam was in thinking that Lilin had gotten lost.

Sophia had always been the apple of Adam's eye, but a large portion of that attention and concern he had for her shifted to Melinda ever since Melinda appeared in his life. The affection that Adam showered exclusively on her diminished, and it grew worse when Lilin was born.

Sophia initially assumed that her father would eventually get tired of Melinda, but his love for Melinda remained surprisingly unchanged all those years. She could not understand what Melinda had possibly done to make Adam so smitten with her.

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Sophia thought back to the past and realized that Adam never cared so much about her mother before. She got angrier the more she thought about it.

Adam was so occupied with carrying Lilin that she did not notice Sophia's souring emotions. It was only when he wanted to bring Lilin to Sophia that he seemed to be aware of Sophia's presence. When he saw that Sophia was alone, he frowned and asked, "Did you come here alone, Sophia? Where's Zachary and Benjamin?"

Sophia snapped back to her senses and explained, "I didn't ask Zachary to come because his disability makes it difficult for him. Benjamin is with him at home, too."

Adam snorted. "Doesn't he have a wheelchair? Couldn't he have shown some effort in meeting his wife's parents from the airport? This is basic courtesy!"

Sophia did not like hearing her father talk about Zachary that way. "Please don't say that about Zachary. You know better than anyone why he's in this condition now. He wouldn't have wanted this either." Adam felt a twinge of guilt when Sophia pointed that out, but it was for Sophia instead of Zachary. He knew that his explosive temper and impulsiveness had made him beat up the love of Sophia's life. Sophia had to live with a crippled man because of his actions.

Adam could only remain silent.

Suddenly, Lilin then said, "It's not fair for you to say that, Sophia! You should be thanking Dad instead of blaming him!"

Lilin's words triggered a wave of anger in Sophia, but Sophia managed to control her emotions before asking politely, "What do you mean by that, Lilin? Would you be grateful to Dad if your future husband is crippled because of what Dad did to him?"

Lilin took her hands out of her pockets and waved dismissively. "Of course not!"

Sophia frowned instantly and had an ironic look on her face. "Then why do you expect me to be grateful to Dad? You shouldn't give other people advice if you've never been in their shoes."

"I won't thank Dad for beating my future husband up because I'm not going to grow up and marry someone who doesn't love me!" Lilin explained her reasoning. "I won't let Dad worry so much about me and end up having to beat up the man I love! I'm pretty sure I won't be in your shoes when I grow up."

Lilin then continued, "Your situation is different. You chose to get involved with a married man who never loved you in the first place. Dad was so worried for you that he had to interfere and cripple him so he'd stay by your side forever. I bet Zachary would have left you and gone back to his family if he's not disabled. Think about it, Sophia. You ought to be thanking Dad for everything because you wouldn't be with Zachary right now if Dad didn't cripple him."

The truth hurt, and Sophia was enraged by Lilin's frankness. "Who taught you to speak to me like that? Was it your mother?"

Lilin shook her head. "Nope. No one taught me. I'm just telling you what I saw. Mom has better things to do than to teach me all these things."

A flurry of emotions appeared on Sophia's face and she could not keep her charade any longer. She pointed at Lilin, then at the innocent and helpless Melinda. "You must've taught her to say that! What are you trying to achieve, Aunt Melinda?"

Melinda shook her head and said, "I didn't! I'm sorry Lilin said that to you. She doesn't know what she's thinking. I'll ask her to apologize to you." She then turned to Lilin and said, "Apologize to your sister, Lilin!"

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Lilin frowned. "Why should I? I'm not lying. The teachers at school have always taught US to tell the truth!"

Melinda was taken aback by that response and did not know what else to say to Lilin.

Sophia's face turned red with anger, and she wanted nothing more than to slap Lilin. She looked at her father irritably and said, "You heard that, didn't you?"

Aunt Melinda taught Lilin to target me!"

Adam frowned, feeling like he was caught between a rock and a hard place. He felt conflicted because Lilin had inadvertently hurt Sophia with the truth after

trying to stand up for him.

"Lilin is still young, Sophia. Just treat what she said as a child's rambling.

Melinda and I will teach her a lesson later, but not in a public place. Let's make our way to the hotel for now," he suggested.

The whole situation disgusted Sophia, but she had little choice other than to comply with her father's request. She suppressed her anger and escorted them out of the airport. They then got into a seven-seater car and left for the hotel.

Adam glanced behind to check on Melinda and Lilin. They were both fast asleep. He then turned to Sophia and said softly, "Enough with the long face, Sophia. I know you're upset, but you need to consider all the challenges I've faced over the years. Melinda has stayed by my side for so long without ever regretting her decision. She's a good person, and so is Lilin." 'A good person?' Sophia thought to herself. She then remarked in a sarcastic tone, "If you think they're good, and if they think I'm bad, does that mean you think I'm bad, too?"

Adam frowned and shook his head. "Don't be ridiculous. Why would I think that way? You're my daughter! And besides, Melinda and Lilin don't think that you're a bad person. You might not know this, but Melinda is more concerned for you than I am. She always reminds me to take better care of you! Lilin, on the other hand, is just a child. She doesn't think like adults. All she did was speak her mind without realizing the consequences."

Sophia grew even unhappier. "So you're saying that everything Lilin said about me at the airport is true? Do you also think that no one else wants me? Do you believe that Zachary only stayed with me because you broke his legs and couldn't leave me?" 1 Adam was heartbroken when he saw his daughter's eroding mental state, but he was not about to beat around the bush and ignore the reality.

"I'm not blaming you, but you of all people should know what happened. You can't lie to yourself and twist the truth about how you got him to remain with you.

I care for you a lot, and I didn't want you to suffer with that man, but you didn't listen to anything I said. I had no choice but to compromise so you'll find your happiness."

Sophia felt conflicted. She felt a little unsettled when her father exposed her actions for what it was, but she still hoped that he could offer his unconditional support and take the view that she did nothing wrong.

“I... I love him so much, Dad. I can’t imagine my life without him...”

Adam frowned and sighed. “I know. That’s exactly why I didn’t stop you from going ahead with your plan. But you need to understand that there’s a clear line between right and wrong. What you did all those years ago was wrong. There’s no doubt about it. Lilin was telling the truth, so don’t hold it against her. She’s just a child, anyway.”

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“But Dad, I-” “That’s enough, Sophia.” Adam interrupted. He did not want to dwell on the past with Sophia. “I just hope that you won’t argue with Lilin anymore.

You’re my only children, and I genuinely hope to see you both get along with each other.”

Sophia reluctantly nodded and said, “Okay. I understand, Dad. I promise not to get angry at Lilin and avoid arguing with her in the future.”

Adam patted Sophia’s shoulder. “That’s my girl.”

Sophia discreetly suppressed her frustrations. She decided to deal with Melinda and Lilin after successfully inheriting Adam’s estate.

It took them about an hour to arrive at the hotel. When Adam checked into his suite, he told his subordinates to take care of their luggage while he brought Melinda and Lilin to meet Zachary. It had been a while since he met his son-in law.

Zachary remained calm when he saw Adam and nodded slightly to greet him.

“Welcome, sir.”

Adam clasped his hands behind his back and said unhappily, “How polite of you.

Though I’m curious to know why you couldn’t make the effort to come with Sophia to fetch your father- in-law at the airport.” “Sorry about that,” Zachary replied. “It’s difficult for me to go far because of my legs. I hope you’ll forgive me forthat.”

Adam glared at Zachary, who sat in his wheelchair. The more he looked at Zachary’s legs, the more annoyed he became.

Sophia did not want her father to blame Zachary for that, so she tugged his arm gently before walking toward Zachary.

When she got closer, she noticed that Zachary's forehead was covered in fine beads of sweat.

"Why are you sweating so much, Zachary?" Sophia asked worriedly. She touched his forehead and exclaimed, "Your temperature is very high! Are you feeling sick? Do you have a fever?"

Zachary gently shook his head and pushed her hand away. "I'm fine. It's just a minor headache."

That was the only excuse he could come up with. He had been secretly doing some rehabilitation exercises while she was away and had yet to get a chance to freshen up, but telling her the truth was simply out of the question.

"Your headache must be because of a fever! Please go back to your room and rest. I'll have a doctor check on you later!" Sophia was so anxious that she completely forgot about her parents. She urged Zachary to return to the room and insisted he lie down for a while.

Adam could only watch as his daughter frantically took care of Zachary. A slight hint of concern appeared in his eyes as he said, "Tch. He's so fragile. If I had known better, I would've broken one leg instead of two. That way, he can still limp back to his family, and Sophia won't have to suffer so much with him right now!" 1 Melinda sighed and walked over to hold Adam's arm. "Sigh! Don't be too hard on him. It's not like he wants to be in that condition! Let's go back to our room and give Sophia some room to rest with Zachary."

Adam sighed and left with his wife.

Lilin was about to follow her parents when she caught sight of Bryan staring at her from nearby. However, she mistakenly believed that the boy was Benjamin.

She walked over and extended a hand toward Bryan, saying, "Would you like to play with me?"

Bryan shook his head because he did not recognize Lilin.

Lilin frowned at Bryan and said, "Don't you recognize me? I'm your Aunt Lilin!"

Sophia rarely allowed Zachary and Benjamin to meet people, so Lilin did not see Benjamin very often. As a result, she did not find it too odd that he did not recognize her.

Bryan blinked and asked, "Aunt Lilin?"

Lilin assumed that Bryan was calling out to her instead of asking her a question.

"Yeah! Let's go! I brought you a gift this time. It's a robot toy! You'll like it for sure!"

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Bryan could not contain his excitement when he heard about the robot toy.

He thus held Lilin's hand and followed her.

The balcony door in the bedroom was open, allowing a cool breeze to waft in from outside. Sophia closed it shut as soon as she walked in. "No wonder you caught a cold! You left the balcony door wide open on this cloudy day! You must've caught a cold from the draft!"

Zachary looked calmly toward the balcony, wondering if he had forgotten to close the balcony door when he came in after his physiotherapy.

It was a good thing that Sophia did not suspect anything. After closing the balcony door, she turned to help him onto the bed. "I'll help you onto the bed and cover you with a blanket so you can keep warm. The doctor will be here soon."

Zachary raised his hand and declined. "I'm fine. Don't bother calling a doctor.

You should go and spend time with your father. It's been a long time since you've seen each other, so I'm sure you'll have a lot to catch up with him." Sophia shook her head and asserted, "It's fine, Zachary. I spoke a lot with my dad on the way to the hotel. I'll stay here to take care of you."

Zachary frowned. "I told you I'm fine. You don't need to make such a fuss about caring for me."

Sophia was startled by his response. "But I'm just trying to show concern about you, Zachary. Why are you angry at me for that?"

Zachary was not angry. He was simply annoyed at her. "Didn't you see how upset your father was that I didn't come with you to fetch him at the airport? If you stay here with me now, he'll only think you favor me over him. Don't you think he'll grow even less fond of me in the future? Will he still let you be with me?"

Sophia's mind went blank for a moment. She interpreted his reaction to mean that he was deeply concerned about the impression he made on Adam. "You're thinking too much, Zachary. My dad will accept whatever decision I make."

"Whether I'm overthinking it or not, I still think it's better for you to be with your father right now," Zachary replied sternly. "And while you're at it, tell him that I'll have to refrain from going over to their room because I don't want them to catch my cold. Please tell him not to take offense."

Sophia nodded and said, “Okay. I’ll do as you say. Get some rest, Zachary. I’ll have someone get you some cold medication since you don’t want to see a doctor.”

Zachary acknowledged her answer with a soft grunt.

Sophia gazed reluctantly at him for a moment before leaving the room. When she saw that her father and mother had left, she went to look for them in their suite.

Zachary waited for Sophia to exit the door before wheeling over to lock the door shut. He then looked toward the bathroom and said, “Come out.”

After a few seconds of silence, Corinne opened the bathroom door and stepped out. “How did you know I came?” “I remembered closing the balcony door,”

Zachary replied calmly.

Corinne glanced at the balcony and shrugged her shoulders. “Looks like there’s another obstacle in your escape plan now that Adam is here.”

Zachary looked intently at her without thinking about anything else. “Why are you here at this hour?”

Of all the times Corinne could have come, she just had to choose early that morning. The possibility of getting caught did not seem to scare her one bit!

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Corinne made herself comfortable and sat on the edge of the bed. “It’s the weekend, and I have nothing better to do since I don’t have to go to work.”

Zachary frowned. “You should avoid coming in the morning. I know you’re agile, but there’s a big risk you’ll get caught whenever you sneak in through the window. You need to be more careful.”

Corinne crossed her legs nonchalantly and said, “I’m bold enough to come here because I know I won’t get caught.”

Zachary felt somewhat powerless and remarked in a sour tone, “Fine. Do whatever you want. It’s not like I can tell you what to do.” “Are you angry?”

Corinne glanced at him.

Zachary had a sullen expression as he turned his wheelchair to face the floor-to ceiling window. He looked out and said, “No.”

Corinne then uncrossed her legs and approached him. She turned his wheelchair so he was facing her. "Pfft! Where did you get the nerve to be upset with me?"

Zachary looked up at her. "I'm not upset with you. You're simply doing as you please, and I have no right to interfere." "Is this what you mean when you say you're not upset?" Corinne lifted his chin playfully. "Your expression tells a different story."

Zachary retorted calmly, "My expression has always been like this."

Corinne chuckled. "Oh, please! I've seen you in all your expressions. Do you really think I can't tell when you're upset?"

Zachary felt a heaviness in his chest. Unable to stand nor recall the past, he felt trapped in a quagmire with no means of escape.

Corinne was tired of stooping, so she squatted in front of him and rested her chin on her cupped hands. "Are you mad I came too early in the morning? Or are you mad that I walked in front of the balcony? Maybe you're mad that I interrupted your alone time with Sophia?"

Zachary's irritation dissipated inexplicably when he gazed at her innocent and endearing demeanor. "I'm mad at myself for not being able to protect you and the child."

Corinne's lips raised into a grin. "Then that's justified. You ought to be mad at yourself!"

Zachary expected a bit more reassurance from her and was thus taken aback by her blunt remark. "Did you come here just to annoy me?" "Of course not, mister!" Corinne tilted her head to one side. "Didn't you get what I mean?" "What are we talking about again?" Zachary frowned a little.

"You asked me why I came at this time, and I answered you," Corinne said. "Did you not get what I meant by my answer?"

Zachary repeated her answer, "You told me it's the weekend, and that you have nothing better to do because you don't need to go to work." He understood her answer perfectly well.

His puzzled expression led Corinne to rub her temples. She sighed and said, 'Do I need to spell it out for you? I'm trying to imply that I miss you! Ugh, it's so cringy when I say that out loud!"

Zachary was caught off-guard by her reaction and felt his heart skip a beat. 'Is she teasing me on purpose to see my reaction?' he wondered.

"Couldn't you have at least considered the circumstances rather than showing up unannounced?" He sighed softly and was no longer annoyed.

Corinne squatted in front of him and rolled her eyes at him. “Shouldn’t you respond by saying you miss me too? I didn’t come here to hear you lecture me!”

Zachary found her quite amusing and could not resist chuckling. He smirked and asked, “How would you know if I missed you too?”

Corinne stood up and shrugged. “You have a point! How can you miss me if you don’t even remember me? Guess I’m just reading too much into it.”

Zachary perceived a touch of loneliness in her expression and gently reached out to hold her hand. “I might not remember you, but I’ve been thinking about you a lot these past couple of days.”

Corinne looked at him with a little sparkle in her eyes. “What have you been thinking about me?” “I’ve thought about the first time you grabbed my neck...

And that time you kissed my cheek.”¹ Corinne smirked and quipped playfully, “Is that all? I thought you were completely smitten by my charm and fell in love with me all over again, even though you don’t remember me anymore!”

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Corinne was only teasing him, but Zachary looked into her eyes and said,

Maybe I have.”

Corinne was taken aback and looked at him skeptically. “Is it that easy for you to fall in love with someone? You’re such a jerk!”

Zachary was speechless.

Corinne seemed to be very stubborn.

He lost his temper and pulled her into his arms. Though he could not move his legs, his upper body strength was not to be underestimated.

Before Corinne could react, Zachary pulled her into his lap and clutched her waist tightly.

“You’re very familiar to me, even though I don’t remember you. I wouldn’t describe what I feel now as love at first sight. It’s more like friends at first sight.

But, I will admit that you intrigue me.’ Corinne struggled as hard as she could but was unable to free herself from his embrace. She eventually decided not to waste her energy struggling. She was not so much worried about being in close contact with him as she was

about putting too much pressure on his already infirm legs. Then again, since he was already hugging her that tightly, it was more likely that he was not in any pain.

“Okay, I believe you! Let go of me a little, will you? Your tight hug is getting a little uncomfortable...”

He took in her faint scent and felt an even deeper sense of familiarity. He wanted to be closer to her and instinctively held her tighter as if he could not bear to let her go. “Don’t move. You can leave after letting me hug you for a while longer.”

Corinne did not protest, but she asked, “Aren’t you afraid we might get caught?”

“I locked the door,” Zachary replied.

Corinne glanced pensively at the door. “Won’t it be difficult for you to do your physiotherapy exercise now that Adam is here?” Zachary frowned. That had been one of his main worries at that moment. He had known that Adam would come over, but he did not expect it to be sooner rather than later.

Corinne rubbed her chin in deep thought and finally said, “Don’t worry. I’m going to find a way to keep Adam and Sophia busy so you’ll have time to recover.”

Zachary narrowed his eyes. “What are you going to do?”

Corinne already has a plan in mind. “You’ll know soon enough.”

Zachary was worried, and he was about to ask her some more questions when he heard the doorknob turn.

The two of them immediately became alert. Luckily for them, Zachary had the foresight to lock the door.

Upon realizing that the door was locked, Sophia knocked on the door and said, “Zachary! It’s me! I brought you your medication!”

Zachary answered calmly, “I’m already in bed. Just leave the medicine on the table outside. I’ll go get it when I get up.”

This, of course, puzzled Sophia. “Why did you lock the door when there’s no one else in the suite?” “Because I took off my clothes.” “That shouldn’t be an issue, Zachary. I’m your wife, so you don’t need to be shy.”

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Sophia then said, “Well, you don’t need to move then if you’re already lying down. I’ll ask the hotel staff for a key and bring in the medication for you. The sooner you eat it, the better.” She then proceeded to leave.

“Wait,” Zachary called out to her.

Sophia stopped and asked, “Yes, Zachary?”

Zachary replied, “Don’t trouble the hotel staff for a key. I’m already getting dressed. I’ll open the door for you once I’m done.”

Sophia responded, “Are you out of bed already? Be careful, okay.”

Zachary exchanged glances with Corinne, and she wordlessly broke free from his embrace. Corinne stood up, opened the balcony door, and left.

After Zachary closed the balcony door, he moved over to tidy up the sheets before undoing two of his shirt buttons. He then went to open the door for Sophia.

Sophia scanned the room instinctively after she entered. Something seemed to be amiss, but she was somehow unable to pinpoint what it was.

Zachary saw her glancing around and asked, “Where’s the medicine?”

Sophia looked at Zachary and was no longer suspicious after noticing the two unfastened buttons on his shirt. She handed him the pillbox and said, “This is it.

Take two pills twice a day.”

Zachary accepted it calmly and repeated her instructions. “Two pills twice a day.

Got it.”

Sophia reached out to touch his forehead. “Your fever seems to have subsided a bit. It’ll improve even more if you take the medication now. I’ll get you a glass of water!” She then turned around and went to fetch a glass of water.

Zachary looked at the medicine with a frown. He was perfectly healthy, so there was no need for him to take the medicine. Sophia had persuaded him into taking numerous different medications over the years, claiming that they would help aid his physical recovery. However, he could feel his legs grow weaker with every new medicine he consumed, so he stopped taking them.

It was only when Sophia was around that he would pretend to swallow the pills before spitting them out again.

After discontinuing the medication for a while, he noticed his legs regaining some sensation. Since he had people that he wished to protect and memories that he needed to recover, he was not going to let himself remain crippled forever.

Sophia returned with the water. “Don’t space out, Zachary. Hurry up and take your medication!”

Zachary let out a soft grunt and took out two pills from the pillbox. He placed them in his mouth before washing them down with the water.

Sophia’s satisfaction was evident as she watched him eat the pills. “This medicine is highly effective, Zachary. You should be feeling better by tonight!”

Zachary nodded. “You’ve gone through so much trouble with the medicine. I’ve eaten them already, so you can go spend time with your father without worrying about me.” “It’s fine, Zachary,” Sophia reassured him. “I’ve explained that you were unwell, and he understands!” “That’s good.”

Sophia wanted to stay with Zachary because she had finally been able to get ‘Benjamin’ out of the way that day. She intended to seize the opportunity to spend time with Zachary, even if it meant having to care for him while he was sick.

When Zachary saw that Sophia was still there, he raised an eyebrow and asked, ” Why are you still here? I’ve already taken my medicine.”

Sophia came to her senses and said, “I don’t have to spend that much time with my father, Zachary.”

Zachary frowned and said, “That is for him to decide, not you. You’re his daughter, so it’s your duty to be with him. You ought to spend as much time with him as possible at least for today; it is his first day here. Don’t worry about me.

Spend some more time with him on my behalf, too.”

Sophia could not argue with him because everything he said made perfect sense. She did not want to upset him, so she turned and left the room again.

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-Before Sophia left, she felt a gust of wind blowing over her and turned to look at the balcony. She had closed it tightly before, yet it had been opened slightly again.

“Why is the balcony door open again?” she asked concernedly.

Her question startled Zachary a little, and he immediately glanced at the balcony. "It was a little stuffy in the room, so I opened it slightly to let some air in."

Sophia withdrew her gaze from the balcony and looked at Zachary. She then said worriedly, "You're sick, so you can't expose yourself to cold air. It should always remain closed."

Zachary nodded and assured her, "I'll close it in a moment. You can go on ahead."

Sophia did not say anything further, but her gaze lingered on the balcony door for a moment before she left.

Zachary closed the door again after she left. There was no movement on the balcony, suggesting that Corinne had already left. He lowered his gaze to his open palms and looked at the two pills he avoided consuming earlier.

Sophia must have noticed something. It would be prudent for Zachary to warn Corinne against coming over even though he wanted to see her. He might have no memory of his past with her, but her presence seemed to make him feel much better.

Sophia left her suite and headed toward her father's suite. The slightly open balcony door still bothered her, as did Zachary's decision to lock the door. When she arrived at her father's suite, Melinda offered her a plate of fruit and asked, "Would you like some fruit?"

Sophia snapped out of her thoughts and glared at the fruit plate in disgust. She then shot Melinda a hostile glare and walked past her, completely ignoring the offer.

Melinda had grown accustomed to Sophia's distant behavior and could only sigh softly. Though Sophia's indifference did not bother Melinda, it did affect Lilin's mood.

When Lilin saw how rude Sophia was to Melinda, she crossed her arms and made no secret of her displeasure. "She's so rude. Don't bother asking her anything next time!"

Melinda looked at Lilin and said, "She's directing all that rudeness to me, not you. I don't want you to be at odds with her because of me, understand?"

Lilin despised her mother's penchant for tolerance. "I'm not at odds with her. I'm not going to stoop to the level of someone like her!"

Melinda frowned. "Don't say that about Sophia. What do you mean by 'someone like her'?" "Isn't it obvious what sort of person she is?" Lilin snorted in disdain.

"She'll go to any lengths to get someone who doesn't love her, even if it means having to break his legs and ruin his family. She's just being selfish! I won't tolerate someone as evil as her! Who knows if she'll do something horrible to me in the future!"

Melinda did not deny the truth of her daughter's rant. She felt helpless, and her expression sank as her

emotions became a jumbled mess.

Adam cared for Sophia a lot, and Sophia's happiness was the key to his peace of mind. In turn, Melinda loved Adam, and she wanted him to live happily and worry-free. Eventhough Sophia crossed the line in wrecking a happy family, there was nothing they could do to change what happened. The most they could offer was a few silent prayers for the unfortunate woman who fell victim to Sophia's schemes, hoping she would find happiness again in her life.

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Melinda no longer wished to talk about Sophia with Lilin. "Let's leave it at that, Lilin. Now go spend some time with Benjamin."

Lilin shrugged and turned her head to look at Benjamin. He was busy playing with his toys on the other end of the sofa. "Benjamin's changed a little, Mom."

Melinda glanced at 'Benjamin' curiously and asked, "How so?"

Lilin tilted her head and said with frustration, "He used to be very quiet. He never talks, and he never smiles a lot either. He was a bit distant with me when we met today, but he became talkative later on."

Melinda felt that her daughter might have been overthinking things." Children are like that. They tend to open up once they get used to their surroundings.

Don't read too much into it."

Lilin, however, was convinced that things were not as simple as they seemed. "I just can't help but feel that Benjamin looks like someone I know, someone I've met before." "And who might that be?" Melinda asked.

"I don't remember," Lilin answered with a frown. "He just looks really familiar to me."

Melinda patted her daughter's head and teased, "You've just watched too much TV. All those unexplained things you see from those shows aren't real, you know! Don't dwell on it. We'll have a nice family dinner later tonight, so in the meantime, you can play with Benjamin and keep him company." "Okay," Lilin answered as she walked toward Benjamin. 'Family dinner? As if I'll ever see Sophia as part of my family.' When Lilin came to 'Benjamin', he asked for her assistance with the toy. He had struggled with it for a while because he could not attach the arm. " Could you help me with this, Aunt Lilin?"

Lilin regained her focus. She looked at the toy that 'Benjamin' handed to her, then at 'Benjamin' himself. She then took the parts and assembled them swiftly.

It was not a difficult task, but 'Benjamin' simply lacked the strength to attach the arm into place.

'Benjamin'-or rather, Bryan-was delighted to see the fully assembled robot. It did not interest Lilin much though, so she stretched her waist before saying, "Be a good boy and play here on your own. I have homework to do." "You have homework, too?" asked the confused Bryan.

"Yeah, of course," Lilin answered. "The teachers at my school have lots of homework for US."

Bryan seemed to sympathize with her, so he carried his toy and went with her.

"I'll keep you company!"

Lilin frowned. "Okay. But you're not allowed to distract me." "I won't," Bryan promised.

Once they entered Lilin's room, she laid her homework out on the table. She accidentally dropped a few paintings, but Bryan was quick to pick them up for her.

Bryan admired the beautiful scenery in the paintings and asked, "Did you paint these?" "Yeah," Lilin nodded as she collected her paintings and put them away.

They're my art homework."

Curious, Bryan asked, "Was this all from your imagination, or do these places really exist?"

Lilin answered, "They exist. I painted them during a field trip with my art teacher.

The actual location is even more beautiful than the paintings." 1 Bryan felt a tinge of envy when he realized he had never gone on faraway trips before.