

# Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel

## Chapter 101

Read Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 101 -

## Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 101

Chapter 101

Xander laughed.

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In Clusia, drones were a hot new tech field, playing a big role in both military and civilian sectors.

But as the market boomed, Ion Wing Drones, a subsidiary of the Pierce Group, had once been the pioneer in the drone market.

However, with limitations in core technology and chips, its shortcomings were becoming increasingly apparent.

With its current tech team, Ion Wing Drones simply couldn't keep up with the market's demands.

In other words, Ion Wing Drones was like the appendix of the Pierce Group, something that could be cut off at any moment.

"Grandpa, what do I have to regret? It's not just the Pierce Group; Clusia's whole drone industry can't even hold a candle to Monterra!" Xander said, gesturing confidently.

"We're way behind in technology. How are we supposed to compete with them?" he added.

Kendrick's face darkened. "We will

it's Monterra or Farronia, Clusia will rise again, and so will Ion Wing Drones."

Xander shook his head with a mocking laugh. “Grandpa, I know what you and your generation are hoping for, but you make it sound so easy. It’s really not.”

He continued, “Even folks in Jaffina have to swallow their pride and buy equipment from abroad. Do you know how the Monterran reps mess with them?”

“I’m just a businessman. My job is to make money for the Pierce Group. I don’t need to be as noble as you. I’m just a practical guy!”

Kendrick just stared at Xander in silence, as if he was seeing his grandson in a whole new light.

“Lab 709 is pretty badass, huh? But why do you think they still won’t come back home?”

“Monterra’s got spies watching their every move. If they even think about leaving” Xander made a gun gesture to his temple. “Grandpa, it’s time to wake up!”

“Core technology is all in their hands. What do we have to fight back with? Ion Wing Drones is never coming back, Xander

wondered.

If it weren’t for Kendrick, the Pierce family would’ve never gotten into the drone game.

Xander knew his grandpa was all about ideals and ambition, and he understood why Kendrick handed Ion Wing Drones to Blake; it was the apple of his eye.

“Are you done?” Stella cut Xander off, her voice icy. She stared at him, her face blank, but her eyes were sharp as blades.

“What gives you the right to judge Lab 709?” She tossed her pen onto the table. “You don’t even understand the kind of nation you belong to.”

“Who cares?” Xander shrugged.

Xander spread his hands, totally indifferent. He honestly didn’t care; he just couldn’t believe Clusia’s tech industry, with its throat in a vice, could ever pull off a real breakthrough on its own.

To him, Ion Wing Drones was worth less than nothing. It was nothing but garbage.

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## Chapter 101

And that worthless Ion Wing Drones and his loser cousin Blake, now that was a match made in hell.

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E55 vouchers

“In that case, with a witness from my company present, Mr. Pierce, let’s go ahead and finalize the split today,” Sebastian said, his voice low and steady.

His long fingers gently rolled the black prayer beads, a gesture that should’ve been serene, but a chill of danger radiated from his knuckles, making the air feel sharp and deadly.

He glanced at Allan, who immediately stood up and made a call.

Harmony Law Firm’s crack team arrived at the Pierce Manor in record time, the same seven top lawyers with briefcases as last time.

Their arrival was pure power and presence.

Blake was frozen. ‘Did anyone even ask what I think?’ Blake wondered, feeling totally sidelined. ‘I’ve been out of the loop this whole time!’

‘Did they all forget I’m just a playboy who only knows how to eat, drink, and mess around?’

“Uh,” Blake mumbled, trying to speak up.

Stella, eyes cold, cut in, “Shut up!”

Sebastian, face expressionless, added, “Shut up!”

Blake ducked his head, not daring to make a sound.

Penelope never thought things would spiral like this, and she definitely didn’t expect the lawyers from Harmony La

to show up.

Watching these elite attorneys draft the company split agreement in no time, she was getting seriously nervous.

‘Why does Mr. Gray’s vibe feel even more intense now? Even the way he’s staring at Xander, it’s cold and unsettling,’ Penelope thought, a chill creeping down her spine.

“Mr. Gray, Mr. Reed,” The lead lawyer handed the agreement to Sebastian for review.

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Sebastian took it, the black prayer beads swaying on his wrist, a hint of menace in the air. He gave it a quick once-over, face unreadable, then slid it over to Blake.

Blake hesitated, voice trembling, “I—”

Stella and Sebastian, their gaze frosty, ordered, “Sign it!”

Blake, eyes brimming with tears, scribbled his name and slid the document over to Xander.

Xander scoffed, grabbed the pen, and was about to sign his name on the agreement, “Let’s run it past the board tomorrow. Congrats, Blake. After this, Ion Wing Drones is all yours. CEO and everything!”

Xander looked up and shot Blake a look dripping with mockery.,

Blake was frozen.

‘What the hell just happened?’ Blake thought, totally lost. I’ve heard of getting thrown into the deep end, but getting forced to be a CEO? Seriously, that’s a first.”

All Blake ever wanted was to be a Playboy. He just wanted to eat, drink, and have fun.

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Kendrick watched, eyes wide, as Xander signed his name on the agreement without a hint of hesitation. At that moment, Xander had no clue what he was really missing out on.

Xander was still feeling all proud of himself. He thought he'd finally shaken off Ion Wing Drones, that dead weight he'd been dragging around.

Kendrick couldn't help but think back to when he used to tell Xander what Ion Wing Drones really stood for.

'Ion Wing Drones was always about lifting Clusia up, about making our country strong again,' Kendrick thought.

'Did this generation really forget the sense of duty that's been running in their blood since the day they were born?' Kendrick wondered.

"Grandpa," Xander said, sliding the signed agreement over to Kendrick with a relaxed smile, looking completely at ease.

"Xander, I gave you your chance," Kendrick said. After confirming the signatures, he handed the document off to the lawyer

behind him.

Xander chuckled, "Grandpa, signed and sealed. No regrets."

"Just hope that when you look back on this someday, you can still say that so easily," Kendrick said.

This was Kendrick's last and most heartfelt warning to Xander.

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On the way back, Stella barely said a word after getting in the car.

She cradled Lucas, who was sound asleep, and stared out the window, lost in thought.

The sunset turned everything outside into molten gold.

Allan, sitting in the passenger seat, kept sneaking glances at Sebastian through the rearview mirror.

"Sebastian," Stella broke the silence.

“Huh?” Sebastian answered, his voice deep and steady.

“If one day you had to choose between your country and yourself, which side would you pick?” Stella asked.

Kendrick and Xander were like two sides of a coin, and as another businessman, Stella was genuinely curious about what Sebastian would do.

Stella glanced back at him.

A flicker of unease flashed across Allan’s face at her question.

He shot Sebastian a worried look, scared that Stella’s innocent words might poke at a wound Sebastian was trying to hide.

“I’ll always put my own interests after my country,” Sebastian said calmly, not a hint of hesitation in his voice.

His ashen face was washed in the golden glow of sunset, and even those cold eyes of his seemed to catch a bit of human warmth.

But deep down, there was a sadness so subtle, you’d almost miss it.

“I hope that one day, Clusia will truly have full control over its own core technology,” Stella said, her voice steady.

She wanted Clusia to stop being at the mercy of others. She wanted Clusia to stop having to bow to anyone else.

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Stella gave him a gentle smile. Sebastian stayed quiet, then lifted his hand, with the black prayer beads still on his wrist, and placed it gently on her head.

“It will,” he said, his voice firm and certain.

Suddenly, a deafening explosion ripped through the air.

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 102**

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### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams – 102**

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In a flash, Stella instinctively clamped onto Sebastian’s shoulder and pushed him back into his seat, shielding him. Her eyes flashed coldly as she zeroed in on the source of the noise, her moves seamless, almost instinctive.

Sebastian’s deep, unreadable gaze lingered on her hand gripping his shoulder.

The loud bang came from a crash in the lane beside them.

A car got hit and ended up stopped right in front of their own ride.

“Sebastian, are you-” Allan turned around, but his words died in his throat when he saw the way Stella and Sebastian were positioned. He almost let out a teasing wolf-whistle.

Stella ignored Allan completely, her gaze landing outside the window past Sebastian’s shoulder, checking out the scene.

The crash was setting off a chain reaction, and things were quickly spiraling out of control.

Traffic in several lanes was at a complete standstill.

“Mr. Gray, let me step out and check,” John said gravely.

But before he could even unlock the console, Stella cut in from the back seat, “Don’t get out!”

Her tone was cold and alert, every word laced with warning.

“Stella, what’s up?” Allan’s face snapped to serious in an instant, and even John turned to look at her. Only Sebastian stayed icy and unmoved, like a glacier; nothing could shake him.

Just as if to prove Stella’s instincts right, the roar of a motorcycle engine blasted up from behind. Seconds later, a guy wearing a motorcycle helmet pulled up right next to the Maybach.

He raised his hand. A silenced pistol flashed into view. He pointed it right at the back seat, through the window.

“Sebastian,” Before Stella could make a move, Sebastian, expressionless as ever reached out and held her firmly in place.

His icy stare fixed on the assassin outside, the killer clearly there to end him, and he didn’t even blink. “Don’t move.”

The assassin fired six shots right at the window. Shell casings were scattered across the pavement, but the Maybach’s window didn’t even get a scratch, like nothing had happened at all.

The assassin was so shocked that he almost forgot to breathe.

‘Damn it, this is the most humiliating moment of my entire career!’ he cursed inwardly. ‘What kind of monster-grade bulletproof glass is this? Seriously? How is this thing so freaking tough?’

People nearby finally snapped out of their shock and started screaming.

Everything instantly descended into chaos.

“He’s out of bullets,” Stella said, stuffing the still-out-cold Lucas into Sebastian’s arms. Without missing a beat, she popped the lock and hopped out of the car.

Sebastian glanced over.

Allan froze.

John was shocked.

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Lucas was deep in his sleep.

55 vouchers

“Damn, Stella, are you crazy!” Allan nearly lost it, watching the assassin gun the throttle, ready to bolt in the chaos.

But Stella didn’t even blink; she vaulted over the Maybach’s hood with one hand and launched a kick.

With a massive thud, the assassin and his bike were sent crashing to the pavement.

The wheels were still spinning like crazy.

“Shit,” The assassin, helmet still on, barely had time to feel the pain before a shadow dropped from above and Stella landed a savage kick right between his legs.

The assassin, now totally incapacitated, howled in pure agony.

His frame curled up like a dying shrimp, completely folded in half.

‘Seriously, does she even care about the basic rules of fighting?’ the assassin cursed inwardly. ‘She just went straight for the family jewels without a second thought? What guy could possibly survive that kind of hit?’

‘Unless he’s got some kind of steel armor down there or something?’

Inside the car, it was dead silent.

John and Allan were still frozen mid-move, halfway through unbuckling their seatbelts. Their expressions froze, and without even thinking, they both snapped their legs shut and instinctively tensed up.

For a second, they actually felt a little sorry for the assassin.

‘Man, as guys, that’s gotta mess you up for life,’ they both thought, wincing inwardly.

“Who sent you?” Stella crouched in front of the assassin, her whole vibe screaming streetwise and dangerous, face completely expressionless.

The assassin just stared back, silent.

“Spit it out!” Stella barked.

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The assassin clammed up, refusing to say word.

Getting fed up, Stella flipped up the helmet visor and was instantly greeted by a face so red and twisted it looked like he’d just been run over by a truck, sweat streaming down like he’d run a marathon.

Stella wondered, ‘Did I, maybe go a little overboard just now? Wait, did I just bust his nuts for real?’

Stella, not really all that sorry, asked, “Need me to call you an ambulance or something?”

The assassin just stared at her, completely speechless. ‘Please, just put me out of my misery!’ he begged inwardly. ‘Just let me die already! God, I’ve never been tortured like this in my whole damn life!’

Stella met the assassin’s accusing, miserable stare in silence, her own face blank.

After a beat, she awkwardly reached out and, without a word, gently pulled the helmet visor back down over his face.

Allan, who had just stepped out of the car, could only stare in disbelief.

‘Stella’s actually, surprisingly considerate, Allan thought, a bit taken aback.

The

cops rolled up fast after someone called it in, and when they saw the mess in front of them, they were totally stunned.

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“I’ll go with you guys to give my statement,” Allan said to the police, then leaned over to Stella and whispered, “You’re on your own. Sebastian’s got that scary look; he’s definitely not happy.”

Stella looked genuinely puzzled. “Wait, he’s mad at that guy?” She pointed straight at the assassin, totally missing Allan’s hint.

Allan, convinced he’d spelled it out, could only stare at her in disbelief, thinking, ‘Girl, how are you still not getting this?’

Allan shot Stella a look that screamed, ‘Good luck surviving this,’ and turned to follow the cops to their car. But out of nowhere, things took a turn.

The guy who’d been curled up on the ground like a shrimp suddenly started twitching, his limbs stretched out, and then he just went completely still.

Suddenly, a tattoo showed up on his skin.

“Shit,” Allan muttered, checking for a pulse at the guy’s neck.

After a long second, he glanced up at the Maybach’s back window, still sealed tight.

He shook his head.

The guy was gone.

All eyes snapped to Stella.

Stella wondered, ‘No way, did I really just kick a guy to death?’

Her brain went into overdrive, frantically scrolling through every legal loophole she could remember.

“Poison. Suicide,” Allan said.

Allan’s good looks went stone cold in a heartbeat as he flipped up the visor. Sure enough, the assassin’s lips were already turning blue, a dead giveaway for poison, and the kind that kills fast.

Stella frowned. She got back in the car.

The moment she opened the door, a blast of icy air hit her, cold as ice shards..

Stella turned to look at Sebastian, confused.

She instinctively looked over at Sebastian, who was staring right back at her, stone-faced and unreadable.

John, sitting stiff as a board in the driver’s seat, didn’t dare make a sound.

‘Man, it’s freezing in here,’ John thought, shivering inwardly.

Suddenly, Lucas stirred in Sebastian’s arms, adorably rubbing his eyes with his little fists. He paused mid-rub when he spotted Stella sitting across from him.

His eyes widened. ‘Stella?’ Lucas thought, instantly recognizing her. ‘Hug!’

Without hesitating, Lucas wriggled straight into Stella’s lap, snuggling up to her without a care in the world.

Stella reached out for a hug.

But in the next instant, Lucas was suddenly dangling in mid-air, completely out of her grasp.

Lucas blinked in confusion, his head tilted like a puzzled puppy.

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Stella blinked, just as lost.

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She looked up at Sebastian, who was still stone-faced and radiating that icy vibe. Stella was just as baffled as Lucas, thinking, 'What's going on here?'

Sebastian shot Stella a chilling glare, then spun Lucas around so the kid's back was to her. His voice was frosty as ever. "No hugs for you until you get your head straight."

Lucas, still groggy and half-asleep, looked adorably baffled, totally lost.

Stella wondered, 'Who's Mr. Gray even throwing a fit at?'

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It was late at night on Sandridge Island.

Allan had just gotten back from the police station.

As soon as he stepped into the living room, he hunched his shoulders, shivering all over as if he'd just been hit with a blast of icy static.

'Did I just walk into the Arctic

Sining?' Allan thought, shivering.

Allan cleared his throat awkwardly. He glanced over at the group sitting on the couch.

No one paid him any attention.

Allan scratched his nose awkwardly and headed over to Sebastian. On the way, he passed Snowball, the big white python, who was just lying there, looking totally out of it.

Allan stopped and asked, "Where's Eggie?"

Allan was just trying to break the ice.

Snowball was stunned for a moment.

Allan couldn't help but wonder if he was seeing things. 'Is Snowball actually giving me a super resentful look with that big snake face?' he wondered.

'So, uh, where's Eggie?' Allan wondered.

Snowball opened its big mouth nice and slow.

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 103**

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### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams – 103**

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“Eggie!” Allan shouted in shock.

‘Did Snowball just swallow Eggie?’ he thought.

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With a thud, Allan was stunned in front of Snowball, craning his neck to watch as Snowball’s mouth opened wider and wider.

Eggie chirped, poking its fluffy little head out of Snowball’s mouth.

Allan blurted out without thinking, “Baby?”

Eggie chirped.

Allan continued, “Baby?”

Snowball, Sebastian, Stella, and Lucas were stunned for a moment.

Big Ben said, "Sweetie, the system suggests that if you haven't graduated from kindergarten, you should go out with a parent."

Allan wondered, 'What the hell do you know, you robot?'

With a huff, Allan yanked the fluffy Eggie out of Snowball's mouth and plopped him onto Snowball's big white head.

Then, taking a deep breath like a martyr heading to his doom, he sat down heroically on the living room couch.

Allan said, "Cyanide, stashed under his molar. If the mission goes south, I'll just take myself out."

After saying that, he hesitated. 'Of course, if I get kicked in the balls, I might just think that it might as well check out early and get it over with,' he thought.

Sebastian replied coldly, "Okay."

Allan froze.

Stella lazily lifted her eyes. "Who is he?"

Allan instinctively glanced at Sebastian, cleared his throat, and said, "Who knows?"

Stella nodded. "Oh."

She didn't ask any

further.

The vibe in the room was awkwardly cold.

Allan, desperate to change the subject, asked, "You guys watching TV or something?"

In the corner, Jake hid behind a decorative pillar, shot Allan a sign, and then slipped away out of sight.

Allan froze.

Sebastian, Stella, and Lucas, his little head darting left and right, were all silent.

“It’s late. Time for bed,” Sebastian said, his icy gaze locked on Lucas. A cold aura seemed to seep from him, and he didn’t spare Stella a single glance, his face blank and unreadable.

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### Chapter 103

“Huh?” Lucas blinked, spaced out, and glanced at the clock on the wall.

It was just eight o’clock.

55 vouchers

Allan, also glancing away from the clock, was speechless. He instinctively looked at Stella, who was just as blank-faced, eyes half-closed, lashes drooping, and even let out a lazy yawn.

Allan thought, ‘Has Sebastian seriously not figured out that Stella doesn’t even know he’s pissed at her?’

Lucas poked at his watch.

Big Ben said, “Lucas is not sleepy.”

Sebastian rolled up in his wheelchair, face blank. “No, you are.”

Lucas typed again.

Big Ben said, “Not sleepy.”

Sebastian repeated, “No, you are sleepy.”

Allan, watching from the sidelines, was speechless.

Lucas puffed up his cheeks, put his hands on his hips, not giving in at all, and poked his watch again.

Big Ben exclaimed, “Not sleepy!”

Sebastian gave him a cold stare, and Lucas stared right back, cheeks puffed out stubbornly.

Neither of them budged.

The next second, Sebastian kept his icy expression as he reached out and grabbed Lucas by his soft, pale little body, lifting

up with one

hand.

him

Lucas's tiny feet dangled in the air, looking totally clueless and adorable.

He locked eyes with Sebastian, both refusing to back down.

As soon as Lucas realized what was happening, he started kicking and squirming like a little turtle, showing off his adorably fierce baby-level ferocity. 'I want to sleep with Stella!' he wondered.

Sebastian didn't say a word. He scooped up Lucas with one hand, kept that frosty look on his face, and headed for the elevator in his wheelchair.

But then, Allan noticed that Sebastian, almost unconsciously, slowed down a bit as he passed by Stella.

Allan rolled his eyes.

Stella didn't even look up. She just kept scrolling through her phone.

"Move over," Sebastian said, his face turning even gloomier when Stella still didn't bother to look at him.

Stella barely nodded and finally moved her foot out of the way.

Sebastian was stunned.

Allan nearly lost it and laughed out loud, but managed to hold it in at the last second. He was just thinking about it when Sebastian's icy voice cut through the air. "Big Ben, Snowball, Eggie, upstairs."

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Stella was completely oblivious, totally out of the loop, and acting like nothing was up.

Allan couldn't believe he'd ended up with this legendary disaster duo.

'If I weren't here, this family would crash and burn sooner or later,' he thought.

"Hasn't Sebastian been extra quiet tonight, or what?" Allan shot back.

Stella said, "Isn't Mr. Gray always this quiet?"

Allan thought, 'Well, she's not wrong, but? Fine, I have to admit it.'

Allan said, "Then what about how he acted with Lucas just now?"

Stella replied, "Bonding?"

Allan sighed, got up, flashed a helpless smile, and gave an exaggerated bow. "Go wash up and call it a night."

Stella was confused.

Night had fallen.

Sebastian and Lucas were locked in a standoff, staring each other down.

Snowball, with Eggie perched on its head, was lazily curled up in the decorative tree, while Big Ben was standing by the bed.

Suddenly, there was a noise coming from the balcony.

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# Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel

## Chapter 104

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## Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 104

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Suddenly, a pair of slender hands appeared out of nowhere on the ornate railing.

255 vouchers

Snowball, who had been curled up in a huge coil on the landscape tree, suddenly reared up, flicking its forked tongue and fixed her with a cold, distant stare, its crimson eyes glinting with danger.

The next second, Stella popped up.

Snowball was stunned for a moment.

It could only watch in disbelief as she slipped over the balcony like she'd done it a thousand times, landing without a sound.

Its tail tip flicked the branch in confusion, and it tilted its big, round head peering at the front door that was left just a crack

open.

It was totally stunned.

'Man, humans sure make things complicated,' Snowball thought to itself.

Meanwhile, elsewhere, Lucas, freshly out of the shower and wrapped up like a little ball in a white towel, was fuming.

Lucas typed on his watch.

Big Ben said, "That hurts!"

Sebastian just stared at the hair dryer in his hand, his face completely expressionless.

Lucas, still huffing, poked Big Ben again.

Big Ben said, "I want Stella!"

Sebastian, dressed in a black robe, gave him a cold, forbidding glare. "No."

Lucas kept poking at Big Ben, refusing to give up.

Big Ben said, "I want her! I want her! I want her!" Lucas, bundled up like a little ball, rolled back and forth on the big black bed, protesting like a fluffy, snow-white pie.

Sebastian sighed.

Outside the window, Stella gestured at the lock, then fished an egg out of her cross-body canvas bag.

'Eggie!' Snowball's mind screamed.

Snowball's big head shot up, his little red eyes sparkling with anticipation.

But in the next instant, it quickly looked away, acting all aloof.

'Like I'd let myself be bribed with just a single egg!' Snowball grumbled inwardly. 'Dumb humans!'

Stella sighed and pulled out another egg.

Snowball sneered.

Stella just went all out and whipped out a box of eight eggs, giving Snowball a big grin.

'Deal!' Snowball thought, barely able to contain its excitement.

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Snowball shot a quick, silent glance at that annoying Sebastian, who was still locked in a standoff with Lucas, then gave Stella a firm nod. With Eggie perched on his head, it slithered down from the landscape tree.

‘Let’s go!’ Snowball cheered inwardly.

Snowball bit open the balcony lock, its tail tip wagging back and forth on the carpet in pure excitement.

‘Eggs, eggs, my absolute favorite!’ Snowball was practically bursting with joy inside.

Stella looked down and found herself staring into Snowball’s big, hopeful snake eyes. She was speechless for a moment.

As she wondered where to put the eggs, Snowball gave his big head a sudden shake. Eggie, who’d been napping peacefully, got tossed right off and landed on the floor.

Seeing how much Snowball wanted them, she quietly set the whole box of eggs right on top of its big head.

Snowball was so happy that it seemed to glow with visible delight, lighting up the space around its snowy white scales.

Stella sneaked into Sebastian’s bedroom, only to be immediately greeted by a flying black pillow.

Stella caught it

air without missing a beat.

Lucas, who’d been rolling around on the bed, lit up with excitement. He leapt up and reached out his tiny arms for Stella.

As she moved the pillow aside, Stella found herself staring straight into Sebastian’s eyes, cold enough to freeze you on the

spot.

“Uh, hi?” She gave

him a little wave.

Sebastian rolled his eyes.

He shot a frosty glare at the open balcony door, then turned his icy gaze to Snowball, who was happily wagging his tail with

box of

balanced on eggs

his head. His face was so dark that it looked like it could rain at any moment.

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Sebastian said, “Who said you could come in?”

“Lucas forgot his pajamas, so I brought them up for him,” Stella said, pulling out Lucas’s little shark-themed pajamas from her canvas bag.

She didn’t mention how she’d been stunned when she opened his closet.

Sure enough, Lucas had a whole dozen of the exact same pajamas.

Lucas, who’d been all pouty just a second ago, instantly turned back into his soft, adorable self, as the mini tyrant from earlier had never existed.

Sebastian, sitting in his wheelchair, was clearly fresh out of the shower. The black pajamas gave him an icy, forbidding aura. He fixed Stella with a look that was impossible to read.

Stella walked straight over to Lucas, brushing past Sebastian without a second glance.

“Allan said you were mad at me?” she asked.

Sebastian gave Snowball, who was curled up in the corner, munching eggs with pure bliss, a cold look. Suddenly, he heard Stella speak up behind him.

Sebastian said, “I wasn’t.”

Big Ben, who’d been quietly waiting by the bed, suddenly powered up. “Lucas is still here, you know. System alert. Don’t lie.

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in front of the kid!”

Sebastian was roasted on the spot and left speechless.

Stella had to fight back her laughter, barely keeping a straight face.

Sebastian turned away, his face half swallowed by the shadows, refusing to say a word.

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Lucas tilted his head, a little confused. glancing back and forth between Stella and Sebastian, hugging his beloved little shark pajamas. Big Ben picked him up sideways and carried him off to the closet to get changed.

“I won’t lose my cool like that again,” Stella murmured, her words brushing right past Sebastian’s ear. He instinctively turned, only to realize she was suddenly standing right next to him, close enough to feel her breath.

They were so close that they could’ve counted each other’s eyelashes.

For a long moment, neither of them said a word.

“Those guys are pros. If it comes down to it, they’ll trade their lives for the job,” Sebastian said, his eyes deep as midnight. But when he brought up the assassin syndicate, pure hatred and contempt flashed across his face.

“That’s why I didn’t give him the chance,” Stella shot back, her eyes flashing with icy determination.

Honestly, if it hadn’t been for the wrong timing and Lucas being there, she would’ve finished him off right then and there.

Sebastian was stunned for a moment.

Just thinking about that infamous kick she landed, he knew she had a point; there was no way to argue back.

Stella just stared at the silent Sebastian, drawn in by the fresh, clean scent lingering on him after his shower. It smelled way too good, and she tried to act casual as she took a few extra sniffs, thinking he wouldn’t notice.

Sebastian was a little nervous. Her nose was practically brushing his neck.

He instinctively held his breath.

“So, why do they want you dead?” Stella suddenly remembered the question Allan had dodged earlier.

Sebastian’s whole body language screamed, ‘I’m not answering that.’

Stella mulled it over.

Lucas came running out in his new clothes, and Sebastian and Stella instantly moved apart in perfect sync.

‘Wait, what exactly am I trying to avoid here?’ she wondered, a bit lost in her own thoughts.

Lucas, all clean and looking extra soft and adorable, ran over and hugged Stella, then gave her a poke.

Big Ben said, “Lucas wants Stella to stay with him!”

As if something just clicked, Lucas whipped his head around and shot Sebastian a fierce glare. ‘If he dares say no, I’ll draw a circle and curse him!’ Lucas thought.

Sebastian glanced up at Stella, and when she caught his gaze, her usually cold and striking eyes, maybe it was just the warm glow from the lamp, suddenly looked soft and gentle.

He raised his hand and pointed toward the bedroom door.

Lucas’s face instantly puffed up!

7

16:08 Thu, Jan 22

Chapter 104

Stella waved at Lucas, then turned around, about to head out.

“Next time, use the front door. If I catch you climbing in through the balcony again, I’ll-” Sebastian started.

E55 vouchers

With her back to him, Stella's lips curled into a faint smile. When she turned around, she slipped right back into her usual lazy, unbothered vibe. She shot him a look, raising an eyebrow, silently asking, 'And then what?'

Sebastian. "Throw you out!"

He sounded all tough, but honestly, that threat was about as scary as a kitten.

Stella rolled her eyes.

'Wow, I'm shaking in my boots, Stella snarked to herself.

\*\*\*\*\*

On the big black bed, Lucas was fast asleep.

Sebastian lay on his side next to him, eyes closed, the dark circles under his eyes looking even more pronounced and unhealthy than before.

Stella sat nearby, her shirt hem still clutched in Lucas's sleepy little hand, scrolling through her phone.

Just a moment ago, she'd hacked into the assassin syndicate's internal system.

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Comment

## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 105**

Read Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 105 -

### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 105**

Chapter 105

Stella caught sight of Sebastian's face on the list with zero effort.

55 vouchers

She looked over the photo, then at Sebastian stretched out next to Lucas. Sitting in the armchair by the bed, she arched an eyebrow, her face radiating lazy elegance.

Seriously, this shot was next level. In the whole list, there wasn't another face that could serve up this kind of eye candy.

Stella lazily glanced back at her phone screen.

Her finger froze.

'Wait, Sebastian is Red Rank One?' Stella thought, her eyes going wide in shock.

The assassin syndicate's internal leaderboard uses the rainbow colors to rank how dangerous and expensive a hit is.

'Red Rank One? So killing Sebastian is basically hell mode?' Stella thought, a chill running down her spine.

Stella turned to look at Sebastian again. Asleep, his face was pale, giving him that fragile, almost ethereal beauty.

His lashes were so long they could put any girl's to shame, hiding his eyes. He was frowning hard, caught up in some restless dream.

Even in sleep, he looked uneasy.

Stella didn't even think about it; she just reached out and started soothing his furrowed brow, slow and gentle, until the tension melted away.

She had no idea how much time had passed.

Lucas

stirred.

Stella glanced down at her phone again.

Over the years, Sebastian had dodged 257 assassination attempts of all shapes and sizes. The price on his head had ballooned to a jaw-dropping 709 million.

Stella couldn't help but marvel, 'Wow, he is worth a fortune!'

Just as that thought crossed her mind, Sebastian's strong arm reached over Lucas, drawn by her subtle scent, and grabbed the edge of her shirt.

Stella smiled helplessly.

The two on the bed, uncle and nephew, no wonder they were related, even their movements matched perfectly.

Her slender, pale fingers slid across the screen.

The bounty for second place was just 5 million dollars.

With a swipe, Stella pulled up the assassin syndicate's loss list and couldn't help but arch an eyebrow.

Every assassination method one could think of had been tried on Sebastian over the years, but without exception, he dodged them all. The assassins sent after him, no matter how legendary, none ever returned.

They just vanished.

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Chapter 105

No wonder his bounty kept skyrocketing, reaching this astronomical figure.

E55 vouchers

But what really had Stella scratching her head was what Sebastian did to make these people risk it all, time after time, just to hunt him down in Clusia.

Just for being the CEO of Gray Group? Is that really worth 709 million bucks?' Stella wondered.

Stella stayed silent.

Her eyes, clouded with doubt, glimmered under the wall lamp as she fell into silent thought. Her gaze drifted to Sebastian's wrist, sticking out from his black pajamas, way too pale to be normal.

Stella sat in silence for a while, lost in thought.

'If I remember right, I used to be a fixture on this list, too,' she mused. 'Back before I "died," anyway.

It didn't take her long to find herself in the completed missions tab, her photo all grayed out, a big, bold red "Kill" splashed across it. And the bounty amount that followed.

Stella curled her lips in a lazy smirk.

Her bounty was also 709 million dollars, the same as Sebastian's!

As Shark, she'd never shown her face. The only photo on her hit list was a random shot of her back from years ago in Clusia. 'Guess they really worked hard hunting me all these years,' Stella mused.

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Her slender fingers tapped the screen, then she wiped all the data and lazily logged out of the assassin syndicate's internal

system.

'Boring,' Stella thought.

After a good meal, Snowball crawled over with Eggie perched on its head. It was over the moon, nuzzling Stella's palm with its big head and wagging its tail fast on the carpet.

Stella reached out and scratched its chin for a bit. Snowball immediately rolled over, just like the pets in those idol dramas it'd watched with Jake, showing off its big white belly and begging for more belly rubs.

'Seriously, you don't have to go that far,' Stella thought.

On her phone, a little red Scorpio icon lit up.

Blade: [You made quite a scene just now, huh?]

Stella, expressionless, played with Snowball with one hand while typing quickly on her phone with the other.

Shark: [No big deal.]

Nimbus: [Shark, I need to talk to you about something.]

Shark: [Go ahead.]

Nimbus: [Kinetic University Tech Research Institute in Jaffina has been reaching out to us nonstop for the past couple of weeks. They want exclusive rights to some research data.]

Stella's hand paused.

'Wait, the Kinetic University Tech Research Institute?' Stella thought.

Shark: [Give them my number. Have the person in charge call me directly.]

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Chapter 105

Since it was a virtual number, she didn't have to worry about anyone tracing it back to her.

Nimbus: [Got it.]

With that, Nimbus went offline.

Because of the time zones, not all Scorpio Syndicate members could be online together.

Shark: [Blade?]

Blade: [Just say the word, boss.]

Blade's reply came with a playful wink, clearly not taking things too seriously.

55 vouchers

Shark: [Get everyone on standby. For quite some time, I have wanted every single person in Lab 709 to be kept safe! And I mean every last one!]

Stella slumped back against the leather sofa, her eyes cold, the chill in them only deepening, her face showing not a trace of

warmth.

\*\*

The next morning, in the dining room, “Sebastian,” Allan called out as he wandered in, looking absurdly handsome in his comfy loungewear, gold-rimmed glasses in place.

He dropped himself right next to Sebastian, who was sitting there with a stone-cold expression.

Allan said, “Something huge went down last night!”

Sebastian just kept eating his breakfast, not even sparing him a glance.

“I’m not kidding!” Allan whipped out his phone, jumped onto the dark web, and shoved it right in Sebastian’s face. “Check it out! Shark isn’t dead at all. She just hacked the assassin syndicate’s official site and totally showed off about it!”

Sebastian froze for a second, his icy eyes sweeping over.

On the site, Shark’s grayed-out “dead” profile was suddenly lit up again, now side by side with Sebastian at the very top, both rocking that insane 709 million dollar bounty.

And on the assassin syndicate’s homepage, the whole thing had been ripped in two in the most savage way, with “I’m back” splashed across the middle in dripping blood-red letters, and a big fat middle finger right next to it.

Allan smiled, “Isn’t that interesting?”

Still, the way they flipped the bird felt kind of familiar.

Sebastian’s eyes locked onto the screen. “Shark is in Clusia.”

“Yeah, ever since last time, Shark’s IP address has been showing up in Clusia. But you know, IPs can change in a snap; for people like them, it’s as easy as breathing.” Allan shrugged it off.

“Morning,” Stella drawled as she strolled into the dining room, rocking a simple white shirt and jeans. Right beside her was Lucas, looking all fluffy and bright-eyed, practically bouncing with energy.

“Lucas, you’re basically Stella’s little shadow now!” Allan teased, draping his arm over the back of the chair.

Lucas just gave a little huff, not even bothering to respond.

He just busied himself setting out the dishes for Stella with his tiny hands.

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Chapter 105

55 vouchers

“What are you guys looking at?” Stella asked, catching a glimpse of Allan’s phone screen out of the corner of her eye. Her

hand stilled for a beat.

“Ever heard of Shark, Stella?” Allan asked.

Stella said, “Not a clue. Never heard the name.” She kept her tone casual.

She didn’t bat an eye, just kept doing her thing like nothing was out of the ordinary.

Allan was just about to say something when a booming voice rang out from outside the villa. “Dr. Miracle.”

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 106**

Read Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 106 -

### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams – 106**

Chapter 106

Allan frowned in confusion. “Why does that voice sound kind of familiar?”

224

55 vouchers

He didn't have time to finish before a spry old man with a head of white hair suddenly appeared at the door. The moment he spotted Stella, his eyes instantly sparkled with excitement!

"Dr. Miracle!" Landen charged in and, with a loud thump, plopped down right next to Stella.

Stella had nearly forgotten all about this quirky old man.

"Yeah," Stella said calmly, raising her hand, but before she could even reach for her fork, two hands on either side of her moved even faster.

Lucas brandished a table knife with his tiny hand.

Landen said, "Dr. Miracle!" He brandished a fork with his wrinkled hand.

The two of them locked eyes, sparks practically flying between them!

'I'll just stick with my fork, thanks, Stella thought to herself.

"Mr. Gray," Nathan said, stepping up to Sebastian and standing at his side, looking a bit sheepish.

He only realized halfway through the drive that Landen had snuck into the trunk, and the whole mess of Landen tumbling out, Nathan never wanted to think about that disaster ever again!

Nathan never wanted to relive that nightmare ever again!

Sebastian's flawless, handsome face was icy cold as he glanced up at Nathan. "You forgot to submit my mental assessment to Jaffina this time."

His tone was calm and even, but it still made Nathan's expression shift.

After

every this, but-

routine checkup, Nathan would send Sebastian's mental assessment to Jaffina. He hadn't even told Landen about

'Mr. Gray even caught that I forgot?' Nathan thought, stunned.

“Mr. Gray, I” Nathan felt a jolt of anxiety.

Sebastian said flatly, “What are you so nervous about?”

Nathan just stood there, lost for words.

Sebastian’s expression was cold and distant as he glanced at Nathan. “Just a heads-up, if you don’t send it in, those folks from Jaffina will start pestering me.”

His black shirt hung open at the collar, showing off his pale skin.

“Mr. Gray, you’re not mad?” Nathan ventured carefully.

Allan, lounging nearby with his chin propped on one hand, let out a snort. “You really think you could’ve sent any of that stuff out without Sebastian’s say-so?”

Nathan hesitated. “So, Mr. Gray knew all along?”

Allan chuckled, “Why do you think, out of millions, Sebastian singled you out for the island?”

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Chapter 106

Nathan. “Because of my ability?”

Allan rolled his eyes.

Nathan instinctively glanced at Sebastian. “Isn’t that why?”

55 vouchers

Sebastian’s expression stayed cold and distant. He didn’t say yes or no, just looked on, detached and indifferent, like some monk untouched by worldly desires.

\*\*\*\*\*

Meanwhile, on the other side, Landen said, putting on a mysterious face as he gave his bulging cloth bag a pat, the thing was stuffed to the brim. “Dr. Miracle, can you guess what awesome goodies I brought for you?”

‘Nope, not guessing,’ Stella thought to herself.

Landen rummaged around in his big cloth bag and finally fished out a small box

Whatever was inside was obviously super precious to him. He handled it like it was made of glass. Lucas blinked his big eyes in wonder, and even Allan craned his neck, curiosity written all over his face.

“Dr. Miracle, listen up. There’s only one of these in all of Clusia, and it belongs to the Trent family!” Landen said, acting all mysterious as he showed off the box.

“Pop one of these, and you’ll be immune to any poison or dirty tricks; this stuff can cure a hundred toxins!” he added.

As he spoke, Landen wiggled his brows exaggeratedly. “So, what do you think? Awesome, right?”

Allan raised an eyebrow. “Is that thing really as magical as you say?”

He didn’t buy it for a second.

Landen huffed and glared at Allan, his beard bristling. “What do you know, kid?”

“Why not just give me ten of those, huh?” Allan joked, reaching out with a lazy smile.

He was always up for scoring some cool stuff!

Landen snorted, “Dream on! The Trent family only has five of these, period. Even if someone waved 15 million in my face, I wouldn’t sell a single one. These are strictly for Dr. Miracle!”

Then he turned to Stella, grinning so hard at her his old face practically bloomed like a chrysanthemum.

Stella stared at the little box in Landen’s hands, her face twisting with suspicion and surprise.

‘Don’t tell me it’s- Stella thought.

Lucas cocked his head, his eyes shining with innocent curiosity, looking absolutely adorable.

He stuck out his tiny finger and pointed right at Landen’s little box.

Nathan said, "Grandpa?"

His voice was barely above a whisper, sounding utterly exhausted.

Landen yelled, "Here goes, Dr. Miracle! I'm opening it now!" Even John and Jake leaned in, eager to see what this legendary cure-all treasure actually looked like.

Stella hesitated, wanting to say something, but held back.

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Chapter 106

With everyone watching, Landen popped open the little box right in front of everyone.

Inside, a single snow-white pill lay quietly.

A faint, refreshing medicinal scent drifted out, instantly lifting everyone's spirits.

Sebastian, Allan, Lucas, John, and Jake were all speechless.

(24)

55 vouchers

Only Landen stood there, chest puffed out, and chin held high, letting out a proud little snort. "Ha! None of you has ever laid eyes on something this rare, have you?"

Sebastian, Allan, Lucas, John, and Jake all rolled their eyes.

Everyone instinctively turned to Stella. She just kept eating at the table, cool as ever, without even bothering to look up at any of them.

Lucas, looking all cute and innocent, stared at Landen, who was chuckling smugly. After a moment, Lucas reached out and poked Landen's arm.

"What is it?" Landen said, turning his head with a haughty tilt.

Right in front of him, Lucas pulled out a snow-white pill from his pocket.

Landen blinked, totally baffled. "What's that supposed to be?"

Lucas lined up his pill with the one in Landen's hand, his face the picture of innocent confusion.

Landen's expression shifted as he realized something was off.

His smile slowly froze on his face.

Allan blurted out, "No way, Stella, was that the miracle pill you gave us the other day?"

'Did we seriously just gulp down 15 million like it was nothing?' Allan's mind was spinning. '15 million, gone in a single bite, just melted away! If she'd just given me a heads-up, I would've taken my sweet time with it!'

Landen shouted, "No way!" He was so shocked that his jaw nearly hit the floor, and he almost tumbled right out of his chair. He leaned over the table, staring at the two pills like his life depended on it, scrutinizing every detail.

And then, with a look of utter disbelief, he realized, they really were identical!

Landen was frozen, totally spaced out.

"A-are there any more?" Landen croaked, sounding utterly defeated. It was like a dark cloud was hanging over him, thunder rumbling in the background; he looked like he'd just been hit by a truck.

'I've actually got a bunch of boxes of these, Stella thought to herself. Keeping quiet is honestly the kindest thing I can do right now.'

Meanwhile, Jake glanced nervously at John, his hands shaking like crazy.

Without saying a word, the two of them fished out small boxes from their pockets and, with two quick snaps, popped them open. Inside each of them was a snow-white pill.

Actually, Ivan, Theo, Maxim, Wesley, Lincoln, Remy, Shane, the whole crew, every last one of them, all got their share. One pill was for each, no exceptions.

They all thought it was just a sugar pill. No one would've guessed that thing was actually worth 15 million.

16:08 Thu, Jan 22

Chapter 106

Jake pulled out his phone and tapped into the group chat called the Yates Family Chat.

Jake: [Did you guys all eat the little sugar pills Ms. Carter gave us?]

Lincoln: [Nah, I didn't eat it. I'm not a kid.]

55 vouchers

Jake: [Oh, and I totally forgot to tell you guys. Those weren't just candy; they're antidote pills. Landen said each one goes for 15 million.]

Jake: [Yep, that's 15 million for a single pill.]

Ivan, Theo, and Maxim were all stunned.

Landen was petrified, like he'd turned to stone. "No."

He stayed frozen with his hand outstretched, then it was like he shattered into a million pieces, one breeze and poof, not even a trace of him was left.

Nathan was speechless.

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 107**

Read Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 107 -

## **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 107**

Chapter 107

'Grandpa, you're such a drama king!' Nathan thought.

55 vouchers

Landen declared, "I've got more! Dr. Miracle, I've got another treasure!" Stubbornly, he got up and dug into his big cloth bag again.

'Why is this old man so stubborn?' Stella wondered.

Landen exclaimed, "Found it! This one!" As he spoke, he pulled out a small plant encased in a glass dome. The whole thing was a vivid red, looking just like fire coral, bare stems, no leaves, no flowers at all.

Nathan sucked in a breath. "Grandpa, you even brought that with you?"

Clearly, this was yet another precious find for the Trent family.

Landen carefully lifted the glass dome, and an exotic fragrance instantly filled the room. "Dr. Miracle, do you know what this is?" he asked, his eyes bright with excitement as he looked at Stella.

'Man, this old guy just won't quit!' Stella thought.

Nathan was speechless.

'Why does Grandpa have to act like such a kid? He's totally embarrassing us!' Nathan thought.

Allan rubbed his chin, thinking, 'Why does this scent seem so familiar? Where have I smelled it before? And those branches, where have I seen them?'

Landen said proudly, "Bet you don't know what this is, huh? Let me tell you, this thing is called-"

Stella replied calmly, cutting him off, "Vermilion Coral."

Landen was grinning from ear to ear. "That's right. It's Vermilion Corl." But mid-sentence, his smile froze on his face.

Nathan stared at Stella in shock. 'She actually knows about Vermilion Coral?' he wondered.

Landen was frozen in place, completely dumbfounded.

Jake poked him in the back, but John, stone-faced as ever, grabbed his arm and gave his brother a warning glare.

“What’s Vermilion Coral?” Allan slouched over the table, squinting at those red, bare stalks. The more he stared, the more familiar they looked.

‘Where have I seen this thing before?’ he wondered.

Sebastian lifted his gaze, and for once, his usually cold, distant face looked surprisingly relaxed; maybe he actually got a good night’s sleep.

“Vermilion Coral is bright red all over and gives off a unique scent. It grows just one millimeter every fifty years, and with each inch, it produces a Vermilion Berry.

“The berries can heal flesh and bone, no matter how bad the injury.” Sebastian rattled off his textbook answer, leaving everyone at the table completely floored.

Landen muttered, “Right.”

He nodded, still in a daze.

## Chapter 107

He looked so brittle, like he might drift away at any moment.

“Whoa, it only grows one Vermilion Berry every fifty years?” Allan gawked, cocking his head in disbelief.

‘Man, in my whole life, I’d be lucky to see even one of these!’ he thought.

24

## E55 vouchers

Lucas cocked his head to the side, just like Allan, his eyes sparkling with curiosity as he stared at the bare Vermilion Coral.

Before anyone could snap out of it, the little guy hopped off his chair, his tiny feet pattering as he raced toward the elevator.

Nathan cleared his throat and helped Landen put the glass dome back over the Vermilion Coral. “The whole Trent family has only managed to raise just this one little sprout in almost a hundred years.

“It’s crazy fragile. I never thought Grandpa would actually bring it here.”

“What’s this?” Allan asked, pointing at a little branch on the Vermilion Coral.

Nathan glanced at it, his face turning grim. “One day, a thief broke into our house, slipped past all the security, and made it all the way to the vault.”

“And then?” Allan urged.

Nathan said, “He broke off a branch from the Vermilion Coral.”

Allan, Sebastian, and others were stunned.

The Trent family’s security was supposed to be the best of the best. That thief went through all that trouble, only to swipe a tiny twig.

‘Is this the downfall of thievery, or has he just lost all sense of professional pride? Everyone was thinking the same thing.

Stella wondered, ‘Can’t Geezer steal from someone else for once? Why is it always the Trent family he messes with?’

The elevator doors slid open.

Nathan glanced up without thinking, but when he caught sight of what was behind Landen, he nearly choked on air. “Grandpa!” Nathan sputtered, pointing frantically behind Landen.

“What is it now?” Landen muttered weakly as he turned around.

He immediately started hacking just as badly as Nathan.

There, in the open elevator, was that squishy little guy Lucas, pale and chubby, tottering as he hoisted a fiery red potted plant way over his head. His mouth was mouthing silent heave-hos, and his tiny hands were shaking like crazy.

Stella, Sebastian, Allan, and others could only stare in stunned silence.

Now they finally understood why Landen and Nathan were coughing so hard.

The potted plant Lucas was lugging over looked like Landen’s Vermilion Coral on steroids, an ultra-rare, boss-level version.

Supposedly, one only got one Vermilion Berry every fifty years, but Lucas’s had no less than a hundred berries, easily. Everyone was absolutely floored.

Allan was speechless. ‘No wonder that bare red plant and its scent felt so familiar. I see and smell it every single day in Lucas’s room. How could I not recognize it?’ he thought.

But he gave Stella a thoughtful look. ‘If I remember right, Stella just casually placed that plant in Lucas’s room, Allan mused.

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Chapter 107

E55 vouchers

Suddenly, Landen felt something heavy drop onto his shoulder. He tried to shake it off. “Quit messing around, I’m trying to bond with Dr. Miracle here!”

The weight rubbed against him, chilly to the touch.

“I said don’t—” Landen snapped his head to the side, only to find himself staring into a pair of tiny, beady red

blanked.

eyes.

He

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16:09 Thu, Jan 22

## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 108**

## Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 108

Chapter 108

Landen was speechless.

Snowball opened its massive jaws in a friendly way, flicked its tongue, and hissed softly at Landen.

Landen was stunned.

24

55 vouchers

Nathan glanced at Landen, who didn't even flinch or blink, and couldn't help but marvel, "Who knew Grandpa could keep his cool like that?"

Stella looked up, shot Nathan a complicated look, and gestured for Snowball to come over. Meanwhile, Landen was still stuck there with his arm in the air, not budging an inch.

Allan looked surprised. "What's with Landen?"

Lucas, looking all innocent, gave Landen's arm a poke.

With a thud, Landen collapsed to the floor, still frozen with his arm in the air

Stella glanced at Nathan, her tone calm. "He just passed out sitting there."

Nathan and others were all stunned.

"Grandpa!" Nathan cried out, sprang to his feet, and dashed over to Landen.

After the chaos, Nathan, eyes brimming with tears, held his grandpa Landen close.

"Oh dear." Landen collapsed into Nathan's arms, feebly reaching out to Stella. "I think this old man's about to kick the bucket."

As he spoke, he cast a furtive glance at the Vermilion Coral sitting on the table.

Stella rolled her eyes.

The poor old man mumbled in a pitiful voice, “Now, only-”

Stella interrupted him without missing a beat. “Go get it yourself.”

Landen chirped, “Sure thing!”

Landen hopped up from Nathan’s arms, moving so fast that one would never believe he was pushing eighty.

Nathan was speechless.

Landen grabbed three Vermilion Berries one after another, totally caught up in the moment.

It wasn’t until Nathan started coughing hard beside him that he snapped out of it and realized he’d gone a bit overboard. Each berry took fifty years to grow, and he’d just swiped a stash that took a hundred and fifty years to produce.

“I’m not just taking Dr. Miracle’s stuff for free!” Landen, now back to his old self, set the three Vermilion Berries aside, then rummaged through his big cloth bag and pulled out a small wooden box.

With a snap, Landen popped open the wooden box.

Everyone was stunned.

Lucas’s eyes sparkled as he poked his watch, and Big Ben in the corner immediately let out a surprised Wow!

16:09 Thu, Jan 22

Chapter 108

The box was stuffed with gold bars.

“Dr. Miracle, this is for you,” Landen grinned, sliding the box of gold bars right over to Stella.

Stella turned to look at Sebastian, confused.

After a beat, she shoved the Vermilion Coral pot even closer to Landen. “Take a few more, why not?”

El 55 Vouchers:

For once, she actually cracked a smile, her usual lazy, devil-may-care vibe replaced by a rare hint of warmth.

Everyone was speechless.

Jake, hanging out in the corner, was floored watching Lucas, cute as ever, pull gold bars out of the box one by one and stack them up like toy blocks into a little pyramid.

He couldn't resist snapping a pic and posting it in the Yates Family Chat.

Jake: [Did you guys see all that gold?]

Ivan: [We're not blind.]

Jake: [Ms. Carter scored this.]

Wesley: [The whole pot?]

Jake: [As if!]

Maxim: [Told you, that's impossible.]

Jake: [Just three tiny red berries for all that gold.]

Ivan, Theo, and Maxim were totally stunned.

With a loud clatter, Lucas, all cute and chubby, knocked over his little gold bar pyramid, looking like he was having the time of his life.

Sebastian's gaze settled on Lucas, his face frosty and distant, with an icy calm that made him seem almost untouchable.

The sunlight slanted through the floor-to-ceiling windows, casting a soft glow over him and melting just a hint of that chilling aura that kept people at arm's length.

For some reason, Stella suddenly remembered last night, how Sebastian had urgently reached past Lucas to grab the hem of

her shirt.

There was a fragility in that gesture, something so broken and raw it made her heart ache for him.

“Mr. Gray,” Stella reached out and grabbed a gold bar from the table without a second thought, then sauntered over to Sebastian’s wheelchair. With a casual flip of her hand, the gold bar glinted quietly in her palm.

Sebastian looked up, his gaze icy and aloof, saying nothing.

“Stella, what’s that supposed to mean?” Allan lounged with one arm over the chair, clearly loving the show. “That little bit isn’t enough to win over Sebastian.”

Sebastian shot him a cold glance, and Allan instantly threw up both hands in surrender, pulling a goofy face.

“Just some pocket money for you, Mr. Gray,” Stella said, bending down so her eyes met his, her voice lazy and relaxed.

Allan whistled.

16:09 Thu, Jan 22

## Chapter 108

This was literally the first time anyone had ever handed out allowance to Sebastian.

For a long moment, Sebastian didn’t say a word.

“This is from Landen,” Sebastian finally said, his eyes deep and thoughtful.

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55 vouchers

Stella ignored him, pried open his long fingers, slipped the gold bar into his palm, and wrapped his fingers around it. “From now on, I’ll protect you.”

She said it half-jokingly, but there was a serious glint in her eyes.

No one, absolutely no one, was going to lay a finger on her sugar daddy.

Allan was taken aback, his usual joking demeanor fading away.

Sebastian didn't say a word; his long lashes lowered as he watched Stella's hand. Her fingers were slender and warm, while his were pale and cold.

His eyes flickered, though his face showed nothing. His fingers instinctively tried to hold on to hers, but the urgent ring of Nathan's phone cut through the moment. Stella turned away, taking her hand with her.

Sebastian turned to Nathan, his face blank but surrounded by dark vibes, his glare ice-cold, enough to send chills down your spine.

"Huh?" Lucas, after knocking over his gold bar pyramid again, gave a little shiver and tilted his head, looking adorably confused.

'So cold,' Lucas thought.

"What did you just say? The Lopez family found out that the Vitalis Pill and Compendium of Medicinal Plants have gone missing.

"And now they're stirring up trouble at Herbal Haven?" Nathan blurted out, instinctively glancing at Landen, who looked just as shocked.

The Lopez family had been the Trent family's arch-rivals for years.

If Trent Pharmaceuticals controlled 52% of the domestic market, the Lopez family held down another 38%, with the remaining 10% split up among all the smaller players.

For years, the Lopez family had tried every trick to snatch the Trent family's business, but with the Trent family's famous Vitalis pill and the ancient Compendium of Medicinal Plants, they just couldn't get a foothold.

But now, they finally saw their chance.

"And they're saying Herbal Haven sold fake medicine and hurt people?" Nathan's voice shot up, his face turning serious. "Grandpa and I are heading over right now. You keep those people calm!"

"Mr. Gray, we're heading out," Nathan said, hanging up the phone and making to leave.

But Stella stopped him. "Wait a sec." She gave Nathan a thoughtful glance. "Did you guys tell anyone else that the medicine and the book are missing?"

Nathan replied, "Why would we go around blabbing about something like that?"

“So basically, only the Trent family and the folks who were at the hospital that day know about this,” Stella said, and Landen and Nathan exchanged a surprised look.

“Linda’s the Lopez family’s secret daughter,” Sebastian said coolly.

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That day at the hospital, Richard, Ryan, and Sophia were invited into the lounge, so they might’ve caught wind of something.

“Those guys just don’t know when to quit.” Stella gave a lazy chuckle, then turned to Landen. “Hang on, I’m gonna run upstairs and grab a few things. I’ll go with you.”

‘Let’s see what kind of tricks the Lopez family is up to this time,’ Stella thought to herself.

Before Landen could even process what was happening, Stella was already heading upstairs. A moment later, she came back down with a black shoulder bag slung over her shoulder.

She sauntered down the stairs, looking all laid-back, but her whole vibe screamed.

“Let’s go,” Stella said.

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On the road, Nathan kept sneaking glances at Stella in the rearview mirror.

Her flawless face was cool and distant, and ever since they’d left Sandridge Island, there was something different about her, like she’d leveled up or something.

“Drive like that, and your family’s gonna be bawling at your funeral,” Stella drawled, lazily meeting Nathan’s eyes in the

mirror.

Nathan froze.

“Dr. Miracle, you and Mr. Gray-” Landen pressed his two fingers together, looking nosy as ever, his face practically screaming gossip.

Stella turned her head to look at him, her gaze icy and sharp. Landen swore she was channeling Sebastian for a second.

But those deep amber eyes were totally lost as she copied his move, pressing her two fingers together just like he did. “Uh, what’s this supposed to mean?”

She was dead serious; she really had no idea.

Landen just stared at her, lost for words.

“Grandpa!” Nathan called out, warning him to knock it off.

Landen caught Stella’s genuinely puzzled look and suddenly remembered that she’s still a student. He felt a pang of guilt. ‘No way Sebastian would actually make a move on Dr. Miracle, would he?’

‘I mean, he wouldn’t, right?’ Landen tried to reassure himself.

Nathan glanced in the rearview mirror again, noticing that a black Land Rover was following them.

It had been on their tail ever since they left Sandridge Island.

If he guessed right, Sebastian must have sent it to protect Stella.

He had the pull to mobilize the Yates family.

Stella was way more important than he’d thought.

‘Should I mention this in the report to Jaffina?’ Nathan wondered, lost in thought.

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In the heart of the bustling city, Herbal Haven, the Trent family’s famous herbal pharmacy, sat right in this prime spot where every inch of land cost a fortune.

But today, the place was a disaster, herbs littered the floor, and the senior doctor on duty was trussed up and shoved to his knees.

Flowers were strewn everywhere.

At the entrance, the patients' families were bawling and raising hell.

The crowd outside was packed so tightly that not even a needle could get through.

"Everybody, look! Herbal Haven is selling bogus meds. My brother's legs are rotting off! The hospital says they've gotta cut them off, and now he's got sepsis. He might not survive this!" a voice sounded.

The burly guy wailed like a banshee, hauling a cart right up to Herbal Haven's front door.

On it lay a man with a sickly gray face, his legs a mess of rotting flesh out in the open. The summer heat made the stench unbearable; people nearby were retching.

The crowd whispered and pointed, gossip spreading fast.

Remedy House, run by the Lopez family, was right across the street. On the second floor, Linda stood beside her father, watching the chaos erupt at Herbal Haven. She was practically glowing with pride.

That night, when Richard and the others came back from the hospital, they were so spooked they kept rambling nonsense until midnight.

Linda only caught bits and pieces, but she picked up the key point. The Trent family had lost their trump cards: the Vitalis Pill and the Compendium of Medicinal Plants!

'Isn't this the perfect chance to crush the Trent family and let the Lopez family rule the herbal medicine game?' Linda thought, barely able to contain her excitement.

Without hesitating, Linda dialed her father's number.

"Dad, just you wait, by the end of today, the Trent family will be toast!" she declared, absolutely sure of herself.

As the Lopez family's secret daughter, Linda had always been sidelined and treated like an outsider, at least until she married Richard and finally had the Gray family backing her up.

Still, deep down, she was desperate for her father's approval and to truly belong in the Lopez family.

Right as she was talking, Nathan's car screeched to a stop in the middle of the street. He hopped out and swung open the back door.

Stella was the last one out, rocking a baseball cap and mask, looking even skinnier than usual.

The instant her feet hit the pavement, Stella snapped her head up/eyes glinting with icy sharpness.

She shot a look straight at the second floor of Remedy House, one eyebrow cocked, her whole aura screaming wild and rebellious.

"Ms. Carter, what are you looking at?" Nathan asked, puzzled.

Stella lazily looked away. "Nothing."

Just some worthless trash, not even worth a second glance, Stella thought to herself,

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"Who gave you the right to tie people up? Call the cops!" Landen shouted, his voice trembling with fury.

Nathan's heart dropped. Afraid his grandpa would get hurt, he dashed over, forgetting all about Stella.

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"Get the hell away from me, you old geezer!" the burly man snarled, swinging a fist to knock Landen off his arm.

"Grandpa!" Nathan cried out, panicked.

The next second, before Nathan could even finish yelling, Stella, unfazed as ever, just strolled right past him.

With a casual move, she grabbed Landen by the shoulder, spun him around, and nudged him out of the danger zone like it was nothing.

Landen, who was all set to take a hit, just stood there, dumbfounded.

‘Wait, how’d she get here so fast?’ Landen thought, still in shock.

“Ah!” The burly guy’s voice rang out again, but this time it was pure agony; his rock-solid punch was now caught in the grip of a masked girl, her face mostly hidden, her vibe cold and totally unbothered.

She barely seemed to exert any force, but the burly guy’s massive frame kept dropping lower and lower, his wrist making a nasty cracking sound. With a heavy thud, he was forced to collapse before her.

Landen, Nathan, and the crowd were totally stunned.

Stella, her face hidden behind a mask, didn’t bat an eye. She swept her gaze around the room, then, with a lazy motion, pulled a stool over; the legs scraped loudly across the floor, coming to a stop right in front of the burly guy.

She sat down lazily, crossed one leg over the other, and said, “Why are you just standing there? Untie him already.”

Stella glanced at Nathan, snapping him out of his daze. Then, Nathan rushed to free the old doctor. The burly guy tried to get up and block him, but before he could even move, Stella’s white sneaker pinned his hand to the floor.

“Go on, and keep crying,” Stella said with a lazy flick of her fingers at the mourners.

Their dramatic wailing came to an abrupt halt the moment the burly guy collapsed. “Cry,” she added coolly, pressing her shoe down even harder on his hand.

“Ah!” The burly guy’s miserable scream echoed through the whole place.

Everyone watching was just speechless.

Everyone was stunned by how hardcore she was.

Landen swallowed hard and shot a nervous glance at Nathan.

“What’s wrong? Weren’t you all bawling your eyes out just a minute ago?” Stella said coolly, her eyes glinting with that wild, untamed vibe under her baseball cap.

If Landen and Nathan hadn’t seen it for themselves, they never would’ve believed this girl, as she’d just broken out of her shell, was the same one from Sandridge Island.

No one dared to make a peep. After all, the last guy who mouthed off was already pinned under her shoe.

The ringtone blared from Stella’s phone.

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She didn’t even bother checking the caller ID, just picked up with one hand, sounding totally casual, “Talk.”

There was a couple of seconds of silence. “Ms. Carter, this is Caleb Martin, the mayor. Hope I’m not interrupting.”

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Stella just said, “Oh.”

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“Thing is, the higher-ups want to know if you need us to send someone over for your protection.” Caleb’s tone was all

business.

With the Lab 709 situation blowing up, they couldn’t afford even the tiniest mistake until everything was sorted out.

“No,” Stella was about to finish her sentence when a harsh voice suddenly interrupted.

“Regulatory Bureau! Someone reported you for selling fake meds,” someone said.

A few inspectors in official uniforms muscled their way through the crowd, but to everyone watching, they looked way more like they were here to stir up trouble than do any real inspection.

They were giving off some serious thug vibes.

Stella glanced over each face in front of her, and the smile hidden under her mask was full of meaning, almost daring them to try something.

Stella spoke into the phone, her tone icy and sarcastic. “You hear that? Someone’s out here impersonating government officials and trying to scam people at the Trent family’s Herbal Haven.”

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 109**

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### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 109**

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“What the hell are you talking about?” The thugs looked guilty and exchanged glances. Except for one real thug, the rest were just hired muscle by the Lopez family to stir up trouble.

Then, the leader reached out to grab Stella's phone.

"Stella!" Nathan was about to rush over, but then Stella leaned back against the chair. The leader's arm knocked off her black baseball cap, her sleek hair fell loose behind her, exposing the red at the corners of her eyes.

She calmly hung up the phone, got up and kicked the guy right in the chest. While he was still down and groaning, she grabbed a wooden chair with one hand, her face blank as she raised it, ready to bring it down on his head.

"Don't!" Landen shouted.

A bang sounded.

The chair veered off and smashed down right next to the guy. The crash and the burst of wood chips made the whole place go dead silent.

Stella sauntered over, crouched down, and jerked her chin at the baseball cap lying on the floor. "Pick it up." She was wrapped in a dark, dangerously gorgeous aura.

Everyone stayed silent.

Someone hurried to pick up her cap, brushed off the dust, and offered it to her with both hands.

Stella took the cap, stood up, and put it back on. When she glanced over and caught Landen's shocked expression, she paused for a couple of seconds before saying, "I don't usually lose my temper."

Her refined features were nonchalant, but there was a cold indifference in her eyes that dared anyone to challenge her.

Landen didn't know what to say.

"Hey..." Stella suddenly looked up, her eyes sweeping over the so-called Regulatory Bureau guys. All their earlier swagger was gone. They just looked like a bunch of kicked puppies now. "Who else did you call?"

She moved with deliberate slowness, calmly stepping on the white flower petals scattered underfoot. To the onlookers, she looked like she didn't give a damn about any rules.

Stella asked, “The cops? The TV station? Or those folks from the Traditional Medicine Association?”

The kicked puppies stayed silent.

Stella took one look at their faces and knew she’d hit the mark. She didn’t bother messing with them anymore, just turned and strolled over to the guy lying on the cart.

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She walked with a laid-back swagger, but to the troublemakers, every step sounded like a blade dragging through raw meat, chilling them to the bone.

She walked up to the cart.

Stella gave the man on the cart a quick once-over, and then arched an eyebrow.

Nathan walked over. “What’s wrong?” The moment he opened his mouth, the stench of rotting flesh hit him hard, making him frown.

He nearly gagged right then and there, but seeing Stella standing there like it was nothing, his pride wouldn’t let him lose face in front of her, so he forced the nausea back down.

‘No way I’m losing to her!’ Nathan thought.

Stella shot a sideways glance at the crowd dressed for a funeral. “Why are you all acting like someone died? The guy’s not even dead yet.”

Nathan froze for a moment, and then reached out to check the guy’s pulse. ‘Wait, he’s actually still alive?’ he thought, surprised.

‘Then what’s with all this?’ Nathan wondered, glancing around at the scene.

He stared at the white flower petals scattered everywhere and the mourning clothes on the guy, his face a mix of confusion and disbelief.

Someone yelled, “Herbal Haven ruined my buddy’s treatment and sold him fake meds! You owe him for his leg! Someone told me to go to Remedy House next door, but I didn’t listen. I messed up, bro. This is all on me!”

With that, he slammed his head on the ground three times, hard enough to draw blood, and the crowd started to feel sorry for him.

A bystander said, “Yeah, the Trent family’s Herbal Haven charges a fortune and their medicine barely works. They’re just hyping up that pill. A bunch of crooks!”

Another one said, “Remedy House next door is legit. Their medicine is cheap and actually works. Just three doses and you’re good as new!”

Landen said, “Bullshit! The Lopez family’s been mixing modern medicine into their so-called traditional medicines!”

Nathan was speechless.

‘Even if that’s true, Grandpa, you seriously can’t just blurt it out in front of everyone!’ Nathan thought, cringing inside.

Someone said, “Landen, watch your mouth. Remedy House does business fair and square. We don’t need to sling mud at others just because your own house is on fire!”

Miguel, Linda’s father, pushed his way out of the crowd, his shifty, scheming eyes making it clear he was up to

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no good.

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“Pffi...” Landen was so furious that he nearly stomped his feet. Everyone here knew damn well this whole mess was the Lopez family’s handiwork, and the part about them mixing modern medicine into their traditional medicine wasn’t even a lie.

While the argument was still raging, a swarm of reporters arrived, trailing behind a council member from the Traditional Medicine Association.

“Landen, seriously...” The council member couldn’t help but rub his temples as soon as he stepped out of the

car.

This feud between the Trent and Lopez families had been dragging on forever, and with both sides packing serious influence, he was stuck right in the middle.

“Landen, let me ask you straight. Did this guy come to Herbal Haven for treatment or not?” Miguel cut in, grilling Landen right in front of the reporters and everyone else.

Landen looked over at the old doctor, who nodded and said, “Yes!”

Miguel kept pushing, “And the medicine... Was that from Herbal Haven, too?”

Landen answered, “Yes!”

Miguel grinned. “What more is there to say? Herbal Haven wrecked his leg. Anyone still wanna argue?” He spread his hands, pretending to be all innocent.

“You...” Landen realized he’d just been set up, and he was fuming, practically bristling with rage.

Miguel’s grin grew even more smug. “And on top of that, word is your family’s Vitalis Pill got swapped out, and your protective Compendium of Medicinal Plants went up in flames.

“Landen, with all that plus the hospital system hack, looks like the Trent family’s luck has really gone down the drain lately!”

“You... you...” Landen’s hands trembled so badly that he could barely keep them steady.

Nathan was about to step forward, but paused when he noticed Stella shift beside him.

Stella checked her watch and asked, “You have a medical license, right?”

Nathan replied, “Of course...”

Even as a therapist, he still had to get certified and go through all the paperwork.

Stella looked up at him, her eyes cool with a hint of something deeper, and it sent a chill down Nathan's spine. He couldn't shake off this sudden, uneasy feeling.

"Jake," Stella called out, her voice cool and detached.

Jake, who'd been hiding in the corner like a shadow, reluctantly stepped out with a pained look on his face. 'I

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thought I was doing a pretty good job staying out of sight,' he grumbled to himself.

"I need you to do two things for me," Stella said, barely keeping her patience.

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The first request seemed reasonable enough, but when she got to the second, both Jake and Nathan showed an awkward expression.

"Got it," Jake replied, and then hurried off without another word.

"What?" The council member from the Traditional Medicine Association blurted out, staring at Landen in shock.

'The Compendium of Medicinal Plants got burned, too? That book is basically the holy grail of traditional medicine!' he thought.

Landen's face went through every shade imaginable. He just stood there, speechless for a long moment.

"Hold on, I need to report this to headquarters in Jaffina!" The council member's face turned grim as he whipped out his phone without another word.

The Traditional Medicine Association of Clusia was under the Dorestan Medical Alliance. As soon as the folks in Jaffina got the call, they treated it like a big deal and immediately reported it to the alliance headquarters.

Headquarters bumped it up the chain again, and soon the news was relayed all the way to some big shot living on a secret island somewhere.

Out on a hidden island, far away from the rest of the world, the old man's phone started ringing. He picked up, looking totally fed up, and after hearing just a few words, he couldn't even be bothered to listen.

He said, "I'm out of the game. Go find Stella if you need something."

With that, he hung up.

He just went right back to give the chubby peregrine falcon in front of him a trim.

He giggled.

Meanwhile, Stella's phone rang. She checked the caller ID.

It was an unknown number.

She answered.

## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 110**

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### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams – 110**

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"Spill it," Stella said, her voice edged with impatience. The person on the other end was clearly thrown off by how young she sounded.

After hearing it, Stella was speechless.

She shot a complicated look at the anxious council member from the Traditional Medicine Association standing not far away.

After two seconds of silence, she said, “Just tell him to leave it alone.” After some empty formalities, the call ended.

Stella was speechless.

She glanced down at her phone, and Nathan, standing nearby, could practically see the flames of anger burning off her.

Nathan inconspicuously inched two steps to the side, putting some distance between them.

A message popped up.

ViperShade: [Stella, the five of us are getting old, you know. Some of these responsibilities are yours to shoulder now. Things like this will keep happening, so hang in there and do your best!]

Stella was speechless.

Her grip on her phone tightened, her pretty eyes half-squinted, and though her face was hidden behind a mask, she was actually smiling.

Nathan had a bad feeling. For some reason, the air suddenly felt way too thin.

Meanwhile, the council member from the Traditional Medicine Association finally breathed a sigh of relief after getting a reply from headquarters, but he couldn't hide the weariness in his eyes when he glanced at Landen.

They'd already gotten word that the Vitalis Pill might have ended up in Tongalian's hands, and just as they were stressing over that, another mess popped up.

Seeing Miguel's smug face, Landen was so mad that his chest hurt. Just thinking about his medicine and book, he was almost about to pass out on the spot.

Suddenly, the sound of applause broke out.

Everyone turned to see Stella. She was wearing a baseball cap and a mask, clapping slowly and lazily, every movement radiating nonchalance.

Stella said, “I think the Trent family's doing pretty good.”

She fixed her gaze on Miguel. Her words were earnest, but her eyes remained cool and distant.

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“Hmph, never heard the Trent family had a daughter. So where’d you pop out from?” Miguel shot her a look full of disdain, not bothering to hide his rudeness.

To Stella, he had the exact same arrogant vibe as his illegitimate daughter, Linda.

The very next second, sirens blared, getting closer and closer, and then came the screeching brakes. One car after another pulled up nearby. Doors slammed, footsteps pounded in a chaotic rush.

Whatever was going down, it was anything but normal.

Everyone whipped their heads toward the commotion.

Then they were stunned.

There were military vehicles, police cruisers, Food and Drug Regulatory Bureau’s vans, and right in the middle, a sleek black government car-no mistaking it, whoever was inside was a serious VIP.

The car doors swung open, and people started getting out.

“Mr. Martin?” Miguel, who’d been all smug just a second ago, was totally stunned. He rushed forward to greet him, while everyone else just stared in disbelief.

They shot each other looks, and when they realized it really was the mayor they always saw on the news, the whole room buzzed with shock.

‘Wait, it really is the mayor?’ everyone thought, stunned.

Miguel quickly plastered a smile on his face and raised his hand, but Caleb didn’t even spare him a look and just walked right past, leaving Miguel’s smile frozen awkwardly on his face.

“Are you okay?” Caleb stopped right in front of Stella, the rest of his group deliberately hanging back half a step.

Stella said, “Yeah.”

Caleb looked her up and down, only relaxing when he was sure Stella was really fine. He furrowed his brow and swept his gaze around. “What’s going on here?”

Nathan gave a quick rundown.

“Are these your people?” Caleb asked the director of the Food and Drug Regulatory Bureau, who looked pale as a sheet. He’d just arrived at work, ready for a meeting, when Caleb called him out of nowhere.

He was so startled that he thought something serious had happened.

“This one looks kind of familiar, but I’ve never seen the others before!” the director blurted out.

“Take them away!” Caleb waved his hand, and the military guys immediately escorted the group out. Everyone else was left gaping in shock.

They thought, ‘Just a scuffle between the pharmacies. But now the mayor and the military force show up?’

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What they didn’t know was that, to prevent any leaks about Lab 709, anyone with even a hint of ill intent toward Stella was being taken in for a thorough investigation.

Nobody would be released until the authorities were absolutely sure there was nothing suspicious going on.

In other words, they were about to suffer big time.

The whole place went dead silent.

“Perfect timing. You can be our witness,” Stella said, her voice ringing out for all to hear.

Caleb paused, thrown off. ‘Witness? What for?’

Stella turned to the white-haired old man nearby, who was glaring and bristling with anger. She gave him a casual wave, and Landen marched over, still huffing. As soon as he stopped, she stuffed a small box into his arms.

“Open it,” she said.

Landen stared at the box, his heart racing with anticipation.

With a crisp snap, he opened it.

Ten Vitalis Pills, sealed in wax, lay quietly inside.

“V-Vitalis Pills?” The council member from the Traditional Medicine Association was the first to react, his eyes going wide as he caught that familiar medicinal scent.

He stepped right up to Landen, practically wringing his hands in excitement, but he didn’t dare touch the pills before washing up.

Landen was stunned.

Even though he’d tried to prepare himself, the shock still scrambled his brain. The old man just stood there, totally fried.

Caleb didn’t know what to say.

As one of the witnesses at the hospital that day, Caleb couldn’t help but remember Landen shouting at Stella, swearing he’d chase her to the ends of the earth if she didn’t hand over ten or so Vitalis Pills.

His face twisted with mixed emotions, and he fell silent.

Stella looked over at Miguel, her voice light. “So, the Trent family now has ten Vitalis Pills. And...”

She shot a glance at the reporters. “Soon, the Trent family will put the Vitalis Pill’s formula up for everyone to see, right on the official sites of the Clusia Traditional Medicine Association and the Dorestan Medical Alliance.

“Anyone who wants it can use it.”

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Her words cut through the room, clear as day. Even with that black mask covering her face, everyone heard her loud and clear.

Landen was still stunned.

Nathan was speechless. He just stared at Stella, totally dumbfounded. He had no clue when she’d managed to pull this off.

Honestly, right after things blew up that night, the Trent family had called an emergency meeting. If the Vitalis Pills had already fallen into Tongalian’s hands, the only way to flip the script was to strike first.

The Trent family had never breathed a word of this to anyone, but Stella was already a step ahead.

‘Is she really just a student?’ Nathan thought, his mind reeling.

“You...” Miguel sneered, holding back since the mayor was right there. “You think you get to call the shots for the Trent family?”

Landen finally snapped out of it. “Of course she can! Not only can Dr. M... she call the shots for our family, but she can also be my boss!” Landen was grinning from ear to ear, hugging those ten Vitalis Pills like they

were treasure.

He was extra careful with his words, making sure not to say anything that might get Stella into trouble.

Everyone was speechless.

Miguel said, "Talk is cheap, Landen. Let's see you actually do it!"

Without hesitation, Landen turned, bowed deeply to Stella, and called out, "Boss!"

Everyone was speechless.

Stella glanced up and caught sight of Jake, who had somehow slipped back in. He was clutching a black box with a look of utter disgust, dramatically gagging every few steps.

To avoid touching it any more than he had to, he was delicately pinching it between his fingertips, like it was radioactive.

He looked up, saw Stella watching him, and instantly put on a pitiful, wronged expression.

Stella was speechless.

She said, "And now, about the second thing..."

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