

# Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel

## Chapter 41

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### Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 41

Chapter 41

A dark storm cloud loomed over Sebastian, rumbling with thunder and streaked with lightning, growing larger by the second. He sat in his wheelchair, cold and unfeeling, like a block of ice. It was as if the entire room had frozen around him.

Stella, used to Sebastian's mood swings, let out a silent sigh. Before his dark mood could spiral out of control, she reached out from under the blanket and grabbed his wrist, the one adorned with prayer beads.

It was like she'd flipped a switch on Sebastian's emotions. The icy air in the room suddenly stilled, and the temperature started to warm up.

Stella's voice sounded groggy and lazy. "Come here," she murmured, not even realizing how alluring she sounded.

She couldn't be bothered to figure out why Sebastian was throwing a fit so early in the morning and went with the simplest solution. She scooted over, made space for him, and shut her eyes again.

She had stayed up all night modifying Lucas' watch chip and only managed a few hours of sleep at dawn. She was completely drained. Putting up with Sebastian was as much respect as she could show him.

After a while, the bed dipped beside her. Sebastian's woody cologne scent flooded her senses, intense and impossible to ignore. Even with her eyes closed, Stella could feel his gaze burning into her face.

Stella opened her eyes and, as expected, Sebastian was staring at her. He gave off that cold, untouchable vibe.

If Stella hadn't seen that crazed, bloodthirsty side of him, she might have been fooled by that handsome face, but she knew better that he was a devil incarnate.

Right now, Sebastian was enveloped in Stella's scent, her presence surrounding him. His nerves, tense from the previous night, began to relax, and drowsiness washed over him. He realized that he could only fall asleep when Stella was by his side.

Sebastian's voice broke the morning silence, and he said, "The watch..." His icy demeanor had eased enough to let words out, but his eyes were still stormy and dark.

Stella asked, "What are you talking about?"

"I want one as well," Sebastian added and then shut his eyes. Before long, Stella could hear his slow, steady breathing, realizing he had fallen asleep.

Stella found it unbelievable, staring at the ceiling. Now she was the one who couldn't sleep.

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At the Carter residence, Hazel, Brantley, and Camilla sat on the couch. Brantley looked grim, puffing on a cigarette. He asked, "Why did Stella suddenly bring up the necklace?"

He'd come home from work last night to find the house in shambles. Camilla and Hazel huddled together, sobbing and scared out of their wits. It wasn't until the maid explained everything that he understood what had happened.

"How should I know? She's out of her mind," Camilla snapped. The wound on her neck had scabbed over overnight, but the memory of how Stella had acted the day before, so reckless and careless of her own life, still left her shaken.

"Dad, do you think she knows something?" Hazel asked, her neck ringed with bruises and her throat hurting every time she spoke. At least it was the weekend, so she didn't have to drag herself to school.

Brantley kept smoking in silence. If this whole mess blew up, that big shot in Jaffina would be the least of their worries. They would be the first to get thrown under the bus.

Brantley finally said, "Frank is desperate to find a wife for his son

“Frank?” Camilla started, but clammed up when Brantley shot her a look. She quickly covered her mouth, thinking, ‘Is he talking about David? The one who likes to play for the other team got diagnosed with AIDS, and still can’t stay away from wild parties?’

“You think she would agree?” Camilla asked as she perked right up, remembering that gorgeous, fresh-faced look she’d seen on Stella last night.

‘Once it’s set in stone, even if the truth comes out, that bitch will be finished, no matter what, Camilla thought.

Brantley let out a cold laugh and said, “She doesn’t get a say in this.”

Hazel glanced between her parents, feeling a rush of impatience. She couldn’t wait for things to move forward.

Meanwhile, five-year-old Ryan was glued to his computer, fingers flying over the keyboard. This little hacker whiz had already spotted the challenge post from the Cosmos Syndicate on their official site last night.

The funny thing was that he’d talked with the head of Cosmos Syndicate on the dark web before.

Allan sent a message: [Location of a private hospital.]

The other person replied almost instantly with a question mark. Allan replied: [Need a favor.]

Ryan sat in front of his computer, wearing the sweetest, most innocent smile, but his eyes were downright chilling, like a demon.

On Sandridge Island, Stella opened her eyes to find Sebastian gone, but his woody scent still lingered in the air, a subtle trace that he’d been there.

Downstairs in the spacious living room, Allan, Lucas, and Jake sat on the floor with their chins propped in their hands, heads tilted as they stared off into space.

Nearby, Snowball lay lazily coiled around the indoor tree, flicking it with the tip of its tail and looking bored.

“What are you guys doing?” Stella called out as she came down the stairs.

As soon as Lucas heard her voice, he instantly perked up and shot over like a rocket.

Soft and cuddly Lucas held up his special writing board, on the verge of tears. It read: [Big Ben is dying.]

Stella followed Lucas's finger and spotted a life-sized, super-realistic robot standing there. The robot was called Big Ben, exactly like Baymax from Big Hero 6. Allan was tinkering with it, poking around like he was trying to fix a toaster.

After a few loud crackles, white smoke began billowing from the back of Big Ben, leaving everyone stunned.

Thanks to Allan's clumsy tinkering, Big Ben was busted. Allan shot a guilty look at Lucas, who was standing there, shell- shocked and spaced out.

This robot had been custom-built for Lucas before he was born, back when Eric was still around. But after things went south, it got packed away and forgotten.

Today, Lucas got it into his head to have Jake dig it out and show it to Stella. And of course, Allan couldn't resist poking at it like a kid with a new toy.

The more it broke, the more he poked, and the more he poked, the worse it got.

Allan gulped nervously, remembering all the times Lucas had gone ballistic and turned the place upside down when he got

mad.

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Lucas turned and stared blankly at Allan. Allan quickly glanced Jake and Stella, silently begging for help. Lucas was clearly furious.

"Go grab the tools," Stella drawled, casting a lazy glance over the of what was wrong. Those four words were enough to snuff out

pecs on Big Ben's back. She already had a pretty clear idea

cas's temper before he could lose it.

Jake didn't say a thing. He turned and sprinted off to fetch the tools. Lucas, instantly back to his soft, squishy, adorable self, looked up at Stella with wide, pleading eyes.

“Stella, you think you can fix this? This isn’t any robot. It’s an AI, and it can talk,” Allan blurted out.

But the moment Allan spoke, Lucas whipped his head around and shot him a glare that could kill.

Stella pulled her hair into a messy ponytail and gave Allan a laid-back glance. “Is this supposed to be hard?” she asked.

Allan thought, “This is a nightmare. Big Ben may be a first-generation model, yet the design is intricate. And if that chip is fried, no one here could fix it. As for Stella, I’m not getting my hopes up.

While Allan was racking his brain, trying to figure out where he could take Big Ben for repairs, Stella had already snatched the tools from Jake and popped open Big Ben’s back panel. She moved with ease and confidence, as if she’d done this before.

Twenty minutes later, Allan stood there with his jaw on the floor, stunned as Big Ben’s control panel lit up again. He realized that she had fixed it.

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Chapter 12

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## Chapter 42

“The program is way too old. Need an upgrade?” Stella said in an unhurried tone, pulling out the chip and giving it a glance.

Still reeling from the shock, Allan blurted out, “You can upgrade?”

Stella shot him a look. He was sure he caught a flash of annoyance in her eyes.

Lucas let out a happy giggle, still thrilled that Big Ben was back. His eyes sparkled with pure, adorable admiration as he gazed at Stella.

Allan stared at her hands and asked, “Will Big Ben still be able to talk after the upgrade?”

“He will,” Stella replied absently, her attention still on Big Ben.

“Can he do forward and backward somersaults?” Allan pressed.

Stella’s hand froze for a moment, and she replied, “He can.”

“Then...” Allan started to ask again.

Stella slowly turned her head toward him, her eyes narrowing dangerously. Then, she snapped, “Shut up.”

After a moment, Stella snapped the back cover of Big Ben back into place and pressed the power button. A white light lit up, and the robot that had once been declared dead began to boot up.

Lucas’s eyes lit up instantly, his mouth opening slightly in awe. Allan and Jake stared intently at the old, patched-up Big Ben, eager to see what kind of transformation it would undergo.

Even Snowball, coiled around the indoor tree, lifted its massive head. Big Ben’s black eyes blinked once.

“Seriously?” Allan blurted out as Lucas lifted his hand and slowly reached out his index finger toward Big Ben.

Big Ben tilted his head, his fluffy body bouncing with a springy wobble. Following Lucas’s lead, he poked out his chubby finger, and the moment their fingertips touched, tiny pink hearts burst across Big Ben’s digital display.

“Good morning, Lucas! Rain or shine, Big Ben is always here for you,” he said in a cheerful, childlike voice.

It wasn't the cold, robotic monotone everyone expected. Instead, it was a warm, lively, and irresistibly cute kid's voice. Allan's eyes went wide. Anyone could tell at a glance how much Big Ben had changed.

He wasn't just a mechanical chatterbox spouting weather forecasts anymore. Allan could swear he saw a shy look on a robot's face. He was totally blown away.

“What did you do to Big Ben?” Allan blurted out, totally stunned.

“I just upgraded the program,” Stella replied lazily as if it were no big deal.

“Just upgraded the program?” Allan looked at Stella as if she were some little monster. Even the newest Big Ben couldn't compare to how human-like he was after Stella's tweaks.

“What else did you upgrade?” Allan pressed.

Stella thought for a moment and replied, “Emotion sensing, danger alerts, GPS auto-recognition, and stuff like that.”

Allan was speechless. ‘Is she really just a high school student?’ he wondered.

When Sebastian came downstairs, he saw Lucas sprawled out, burying himself in Big Ben's soft, bouncy belly. Lucas made a

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heart gesture to Stella behind his back, and Big Ben clumsily tried to mimic him, struggling to form a heart with his chubby fingers.

“Mr. Gray,” Jake called out. He immediately noticed Sebastian, feeling the sudden chill in the air. Behind him, John was dressed in a suit, about to head out.

“Lucas, go change your clothes,” Sebastian said coolly.

Lucas blinked. Sebastian added, “We're going to the hospital to see your great-grandmother.”

As soon as he heard they were visiting his great-grandmother, Lucas nodded sweetly. But after a couple of steps, he dashed back and started gesturing excitedly at Big Ben..

He wanted his great-grandmother to meet Big Ben, too. Sebastian didn't object. Lucas scampered upstairs on his little legs to get changed.

"Sebastian, you seriously have no clue how incredible Stella is. Look at Big Ben. She brought him back to life," Allan gushed.

Sebastian's gaze landed on Big Ben's fresh new face, and memories of his family came flooding back. It felt like a lifetime ago. Big Ben tilted his head, watching Sebastian, as if he could sense something.

Suddenly, Big Ben waddled over to Stella, scooped her up in a perfect princess carry, and set her down right in Sebastian's arms like it was nothing.

Stella and Sebastian didn't know what was going on at all. Sebastian instinctively tightened his hold on her.

Big Ben chirped, "I just picked up on your sadness, so the system figured this would make you feel better."

The adorable Big Ben puffed out his chest, gave it a proud pat, and tried to make a heart with his hands for Sebastian. Then Big Ben added, "No need to thank me."

Sebastian and Stella were left speechless. Allan chuckled, calling AI next level, and the sight left everyone in shock.

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On the road, inside the Maybach, Stella sat in her black T-shirt, staring out the half-open window. The cool breeze drifted in, blowing her long hair loose behind her. She propped her chin on one hand, not bothered by the wind or her hair.

Her hair brushed against Sebastian's cheek. Big Ben, sitting across from them, suddenly said, "The system is picking up your heart rate."

Sebastian shot back, "Shut up."

Big Ben replied, "Sure thing, sir! But with your heart beating so fast, maybe you should get checked out." Sebastian was left speechless.

Stella didn't turn her head, a faint smirk on her lips. Lucas kept glancing between Sebastian and Stella, swinging his legs, clearly in a great mood.

Sebastian's private phone rang. The caller ID showed it was Allan "Sebastian," Allan said, his voice unusually serious, nothing like his usual playful self. "Something happened to Paul."

Paul, the legendary acupuncture master who stood for the highest level in the country, was in trouble. Sebastian's eyes darkened, a storm raging behind them.

"Paul's top student betrayed him, crippled his hands, and defected to Tongalia with Paul's Acupuncture Mastery. In two weeks, he'll be representing Tongalia at the International Traditional Medicine Summit," Allan added.

Even through the phone, Allan's fury was unmistakable. As a grandmaster, Paul had only taught his acupuncture secrets to

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his top student. Now, with his hands ruined and his top student having turned traitor, Penn's Acupuncture Mastery could be lost forever.

Big Ben piped up and shouted, "Warning! Warning! The system detects your emotional levels hitting the danger zone." Right then, Sebastian's whole vibe was ice-cold, his eyes tinged with red, radiating a dangerous, almost predatory energy.

The call ended. Sebastian closed his eyes, lost in thought. John and Jake, in the front seat, didn't even dare to breathe.

Sebastian remembered the serious look on Nathan's face when I got the call last night. It seemed that a trip to Jaffina was on the horizon.

Soon, they reached the door to the patient room at the private spital. The moment Sebastian appeared, everyone greeted him with serious respect.

The door swung open. Inside, the beeping machines and the whirring humidifier blended. As soon as Stella heard it, her steps faltered for a split second, her face shifting. Then she rushed straight over to Annette's bedside.

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Chapter 13

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Chapter 43

Stella's face turned icy cold, and her usual laid-back vibe vanished in an instant. The chill in her eyes was unmistakable when she wasn't smiling.

Without a second thought, she ripped the IV needle out of Anne's hand. The IV fluid mixed with blood, leaving red- stained drops on the white floor.

"Go get someone!" Sebastian called out. His presence was chilling as if winter descended.

John spun around and left in a hurry. Lucas stared at the hospital bed, frozen in terror, checked out of reality. The next second, his feet left the ground as Big Ben scooped him up, trying to calm him down.

Stella, cold as ice, scanned the room for the medical cart. Without a word, she dragged it over, cracked open the glass vials of Epinephrine, Atropine, and Lidocaine with her bare hands, and drew the meds into a syringe.

As Stella was about to inject the meds into Annette, a furious shout exploded from the doorway, “Are you crazy? Stop right now!” Stella didn’t look up and pushed the drugs straight into Annette’s vein.

“I said stop!” The attending doctor shouted as he barged in, reaching out to yank her away.

“Shut up!” Sebastian snapped, his voice colder than a blizzard. The temperature in the room seemed to drop instantly, freezing everyone in place. Jake and the bodyguards blocked the doctor at the door.

“M-Mr. Gray,” the doctor stuttered, as if his tongue had been burned, barely able to get the words out when he saw who it

was.

“What’s going on?” A commanding voice rang out in the hallway. A middle-aged man in a black suit strode in, with the hospital director and other administrators trailing behind. Walking right beside him was Nathan, Sebastian’s hypnotherapist.

The man was Charles Trent, CEO of the biggest pharmaceutical company in the country. Over half the nation’s meds came from his company, Trent Pharmaceuticals, and their hospitals were the most famous private chain around.

The attending doctor rushed over to explain. Nathan hadn’t known about Annette’s situation until now, and he was stunned. When his eyes landed on the cold, solitary figure in the room, he suddenly realized it was the girl who’d mysteriously shown up by Sebastian’s side.

“Mr...” Nathan started, but before he could finish, Stella spun around, her presence so intense that it felt like the entire room was holding its breath.

“Mr. Trent, that’s her,” the attending doctor blurted, pointing at Stella. But the hospital director knew what Stella could do. Last time, she’d brought Annette back from the edge with one shot, after all experts had given up. He knew she didn’t make reckless moves.

“The monitor says everything is normal. If those meds mess up Annette, don’t come crying to me. I’m not taking the fall,” the attending doctor said.

He was still fuming, but Stella, face cold as ice, grabbed him by the collar and dragged him right up to the hospital bed.

“Look closely,” Stella ordered, yanking the wires off Annette that connected her to the monitor. Everyone gasped, but what happened next left them speechless.

The sensor wires were clearly disconnected from Annette, but the monitor kept showing green, numbers steady, as if nothing had happened.

“What meds did you prescribe?” Stella demanded, her icy aura making everyone freeze in place. The attending doctor felt like he was back in med school, helpless in front of a top mentor. The attending doctor blurted out a string of drug names without thinking.

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“Look again!” Stella snapped, shoving the IV bags right in his face and forcing him to read the labels.

“This can’t be,” The attending doctor stammered. He felt like he been dunked in ice water, nearly collapsing as he stared at

the labels.

Not a single drug matched what he’d listed. How is this even possible?’ he thought.

He’d entered each medication into the system himself and remembered every detail. Especially for Annette, there’s no way he could have gotten it wrong.

Nathan rushed to the bedside to double-check and gave Charles shake of the head. Charles’s expression went stone cold.

“Pull up the records,” Charles ordered, his voice low and commanding. He shot a glance at Sebastian, knowing that if they couldn’t give him a satisfactory answer, none of them would make it out of here alive.

“If you know what’s good for you, you’d better have the doctors check every room in this hospital,” Stella said.

Her eyes flashed with defiance, the amber in her gaze deepening to a fierce glow. She lifted her hand and locked eyes with Charles, daring him to challenge her.

Charles frowned instinctively and wondered, ‘What does she mean by that?’

Suddenly, a voice called out, “Doctor, hurry! Help! Somebody, please!” In the very next moment, screams and cries erupted in the hallway, turning the place into a living hell.

Medication mistakes spread through every room, sending nurses and doctors into a frenzy. Simultaneously, the hospital’s north, south, east, and west entrances all slammed shut and locked, leaving everyone trapped in the chaos.

An unknown fear was crashing over the hospital, more intense than anything they’d ever faced.

The hospital director hung up, his face drained of color, and sweat glistening on his skin. He passed along the call exactly as it had come. Chaos had erupted, every exit was sealed, and the hospital was locked down, trapping everyone inside.

“Call the police,” Charles said. He didn’t miss a beat, but his gaze landed squarely on Stella. She’d given him that warning earlier, almost like she’d seen this coming.

Stella let Charles stare her down, but once she was sure Annette was safe, rage erupted inside her.

Annette was only out of danger because they’d rushed in fast, caught the mess right away, and the meds hadn’t been pumped in too much. But there were still tons of critical patients in the hospital. One slip-up and someone could die.

She instinctively looked over at Sebastian. Big Ben, still holding Lucas, suddenly heard a crackling noise from within his body, hit by some electromagnetic interference. At the same moment, every screen in the hallways and patient rooms went pitch black.

Then, every monitor was taken over by the same image, a man sitting in a dark room, wearing a bizarre white mask.

It was like someone had slammed the pause button. The hospital already gripped by fear, fell into a deathly silence. Everyone stared at the masked man on the screen, waiting for him to speak.

Charles looked down at his phone. In the Haliville medical system’s emergency chat, messages were pouring in one after another.

The entire Haliville medical network had been hacked by a single hacker, and all systems were paralyzed. Every hospital screen was now hijacked, playing the same video on loop.

Someone had already started livestreaming the chaos on a video app, and it went viral in minutes, rocketing to the top of the trending charts. Suddenly, everyone was glued to their screens, all eyes on the hacker.

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“Don’t even bother, you Clusian trash,” the hacker sneered, his voice dripping with contempt. Even behind that creepy mask, his arrogance shone through the screen. Stella’s gaze sharpened cold and piercing as steel.

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 44**

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Chapter 44

“I’ve set a death command in your hospital’s system,” the masked man said, letting out that classic villain laugh.

Nobody realized how bad things were yet. The masked man snapped his fingers, and in a flash, the whole hospital went dark. The place was plunged into deathly silence.

“Where’s the backup generator?” Charles roared.

Hospitals always had two power sources. If the main power went out, the backup generator was supposed to switch over instantly, keeping all the critical patients and those in surgery safe. But this time, nothing happened.

“The death command is a sabotage order for the hospital’s power system, including the backup generator,” Stella said in a cold, emotionless tone, her rage simmering beneath the surface

Charles exploded, “This guy is insane.”

Even a single minute of blackout could mean death for patients who couldn’t breathe or keep their hearts beating on their own, for newborns in incubators who needed electricity to survive, and for anyone lying on the operating table mid-surgery.

Especially since he’d heard the news, every hospital in the city had lost power. At that moment, the TV on the wall suddenly flickered to life, and the power came back on.

“If you don’t want them to die, you’d better do as I say,” the masked man threatened, his voice cold and merciless.

The masked man pressed his fingertips together under his chin, his ego swelling to the max. He looked like he truly believed he was some god, holding the power of life and death in his hands.

“As for that cripple from the Gray family, Sebastian, I want to see him crawling on all fours like a dog in front of the Gray Group building within thirty minutes. If not, every single one of these people dies.”

The feed jumped to the ICU, showing each patient who couldn’t breathe on their own, lined up from left to right on the screen. The sound of sobbing soon echoed from the hallway outside. Then, the screen went black.

All eyes turned to Sebastian. He sat in his black wheelchair, his face void of any emotion as he idly twirled the prayer beads. He radiated a chilling, almost inhuman presence. A single glance from him could freeze the blood of anyone in the room.

Right then, Sebastian's lips curled into a mocking smirk. Behind him, John and Jake were so furious that their muscles went rock-hard. Nobody said a word.

Stella's eyes narrowed with a dangerous glint, her face frosty. She pressed her tongue against her teeth, barely keeping her temper in check. If Lucas weren't here, her rage would have erupted.

But before she could say anything, the hospital room door was suddenly thrown open from the outside.

Carlos Gray, who'd been hospitalized for observation after suffering a heart attack from watching Sebastian set Gray Manor ablaze, barged in with Sophia supporting him, his presence fierce and commanding.

"If you still consider yourself one of the Grays, do as that hacker says," Carlos thundered. Though his face was pale from illness, Carlos's eyes bore down on Sebastian, his voice echoing through the room. Sebastian's gaze was dark and unreadable, and he stayed silent.

His striking features were locked in a cold, unreadable expression, chilling the air around him. He slowly lifted his right hand, halting John, who looked ready to act.

"Sebastian, the whole city is putting pressure on the Gray family. With so many innocent lives at stake, can you stand by and watch them die?" Sophia said, her voice trembling. She wore a tailored dress, her eyes glistening with tears.

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Playing the moral card now?' Stella thought. She arched her brow with a dangerous chill and let out a cold, mocking laugh. The sound was so out of place in the hospital room that everyone turned to stare at her.

"Save them? You think talking is enough?" Stella said, one hand radiating impatience and attitude. Her sarcasm was razor-sharp

her pocket as she strolled over to Sebastian, her face making it clear she was not someone to mess with.

Lucas, held in Big Ben's arms, clenched his little fists, clearly fired up.

"Is saving face more important than saving lives?" Sophia asked, her voice trembling with tears, looking so pitiful that the hospital executives standing next to Charles were moved.

With so many critically ill patients across the city, if sacrificing one person could save them all, they would do it.

Stella let out a cold, mocking laugh, her eyes full of sarcasm. She said, “Mr. Gray’s pride is worth more than your life.”

Her gaze swept over everyone in the room, cold and ruthless. Then she shouted, “Big Ben, throw them out.”

At Stella’s command, Big Ben didn’t hesitate. He grabbed Carlos and Sophia by the arms and hauled them out, clearing everyone else from the room except for Charles and Nathan.

Big Ben pouted, “I really don’t want to be so rude. Hmph.”

Charles and Nathan stared in stunned silence, and John and Jake were left speechless.

up Outside the room, Carlos was so furious that he nearly had another heart attack, clutching his chest as his phone blew nonstop with calls from people demanding answers.

Sophia wasn’t about to let this chance pass by. While planning her next move, she noticed out of the corner of her eye a bunch of young people in the hallway, holding up their phones and looking for the best angle to livestream the chaos.

The very next second, with a dramatic thud, Sophia collapsed right at the doorway and pleaded, “Sebastian, please, I’m begging you. Save these innocent people.” Instantly, every phone camera whipped around to catch her performance.

Inside the room, Jake couldn’t hold back and spat out a curse, “What a bitch move.”

Outside, the hallway swarmed with people drawn by Sophia’s dramatic act. Patient families, unaware of the truth, packed the doorway so tightly that it was impossible to squeeze through.

They pounded and kicked at the door in a frenzy, completely unhinged. If it kept going, the situation could erupt at any

moment.

But Sebastian's attention was fixed on Stella. Her expression remained calm, yet her eyes burned with a dangerous red as she glared toward the doorway, her delicate face cold and tense. All that rage was directed at him alone.

With no outsiders in the room, Charles was bowing to Sebastian. He was about to say something when Sebastian's phone rang, interrupting him. Sebastian picked up, face unreadable. The voice said, "Mr. Gray, this is Gavin Shaw, the new head of the Haliville Cybersecurity Division."

Gavin's voice on the other end was tinged with arrogance. He said, "We hope you can work with us and stall for a bit, alright?"

"And what if you can't handle it?" Stella asked. Her voice was chilly and sharp, her eyes fixed on the door as the mob outside went nuts, pounding away. Her impatience was written all over her face.

Gavin had no clue that inside the room, everyone except Sebastian was gaping at Stella in stunned silence. She was crackling with anger as she whipped out a slim black laptop, her fingers flying over the keyboard.

Meanwhile, at the Cybersecurity Division, Gavin stood with his phone casually in one hand, his expression relaxed as he surveyed the wall of screens filled with Skynet data. He radiated confidence.

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"Impossible," he scoffed, his tone full of disdain. The other end of the line was dead silent.

In an instant, the once-invincible Cybersecurity Division was compromised. The vast wall of LED screens filled with Skynet data went black, then lit up again to reveal a girl in black.

Her face was cold and unreadable, a baseball cap pulled low as her gaze bore down on everyone below.

"What if you can't handle it?" she taunted, letting out a cold, cocky laugh straight at them through the screen. Her entire presence radiated pure outlaw swagger.

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## Chapter 45

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Chapter 45

Gavin stood there, phone still in hand, his mouth agape. Behind him, the entire Cybersecurity Division was silent. Not a sound could be heard.

“Who are you?” Gavin blurted out the question in disbelief.

Meanwhile, in the hospital room, everyone was shocked. If they hadn’t witnessed it themselves, nobody would have believed that the hacker who hacked into the Cybersecurity Division like it was child’s play was a girl.

Sebastian, meanwhile, was idly rolling his prayer beads between his fingers, his gaze mysterious and impossible to read. Charles looked like he wanted to say something, but stopped himself. Sebastian shot him a lazy, half-lidded glance.

Charles caught the signal and instantly gave up on contacting the Dorestan. He decided to watch and see what happened

next.

Stella scoffed, her voice casual and a bit contemptuous, “You mean to tell me you still haven’t cracked his firewall?”

She glanced over her slim, custom-built laptop, her ridiculously long lashes shadowing eyes that were icy with impatience. ‘Could they be any more useless?’ she thought, barely hiding her annoyance.

“Holy shit!” someone in the Cybersecurity Division suddenly blurted out.

Just now, right under their noses, she hacked into an international satellite in less than three seconds. ‘Does she get how close we are to causing an international disaster here?’ that person thought.

“Right now, besides Cosmos Syndicate, four other international hacker groups are lying in wait online. Haliville is only the appetizer. If we don’t teach them a lesson now, it will come back to bite us,” Stella said.

Behind her black mask, Stella’s voice was icy as she drummed her fingers on the desk. Instantly, the LED screen on the front wall of the Cybersecurity Division split in half, and a world map popped up for everyone to see.

On that map, a swarm of red dots lit up all around Clusia, closing in like a siege. Everyone watching felt a chill run down their spine.

“Do you even realize you broke international law?” Gavin said, feeling awkward and at a loss for words.

This was the first case he’d gotten since landing in Haliville. He didn’t expect it to turn into such a nightmare.

Stella scoffed, her gaze downcast and full of disdain. Outside, the crowd was still shouting and banging on the door. There was a dangerous glint in Stella’s eyes, something dark simmering beneath the surface.

Big Ben piped up and shouted, “Warning! Warning! The system detects your emotional levels hitting the danger zone.”

A big hand with slender fingers landed on Stella’s head. The fingertips still carried a faint trace of sandalwood, a mark left by years of prayer beads. Even through her baseball cap, Stella stiffened, caught off guard. Stella instinctively looked up, locking eyes with Sebastian.

Charles and Nathan exchanged a glance. ‘Isn’t Sebastian supposed to hate physical contact?’ they both thought.

Sebastian’s eyes blazed with anger, and he said, “That guy called me a lame loser.”

John and Jake exchanged glances, wondering if they’d heard right. ‘Why does Mr. Gray sound so salty all of a sudden?’ they thought.

If Sebastian wanted to, with just a click of his mouse, he could drag that guy out from the ends of the earth and tear him apart. There was no need for all this talk.

1/3

Stella fixed her gaze on him, eyes still cold but now flashing with something ruthless. “You’re not,” she said, her tone sharp and unwavering. She hadn’t forgotten Lucas was still in the room and her mood sank further.

“Mr. Gray, you’re not,” she said again, her voice steady and reassuring. But someone had to pay for the mess today, and that

hacker was so dead.

Anyone could see that Stella had instantly pulled back all that killer vibe. When she looked up again, she was back to her

usual chill, unbothered self.

“Gavin, right?” she said, with a cocky, almost feral smirk, her eyes cold and wild.

Gavin opened his mouth, but was so stunned by Stella’s sudden change in attitude that he was left speechless.

“Since you can’t handle it, it’s my turn now,” Stella said. With that Stella dropped out of the Cybersecurity Division’s system without a second thought.

Outside, the crowd, furious at the thought of Sebastian being inside, brandished folding chairs, ready to shatter the glass and charge into the room.

Suddenly, every overhead light in the corridor blew out in a shower of sparks. People screamed and hit the floor, clutching their heads, hearts racing with terror.

All across Haliville, every hospital corridor and patient room screen flickered, just like the hacker attack earlier, but this time, the spotlight was on Stella.

Even with the black mask and baseball cap, it was obvious she was a young girl, her eyes cold and fierce, with a dangerous edge.

She didn’t say a word, but her fingers flew across the keyboard. At that very moment, intrusion warnings lit up at satellite stations all over the globe. The sheer scale of it sent shockwaves worldwide.

At the same time, in an apartment somewhere in Monterra, the masked man was kicking back with his eyes closed, soaking in some chill classical tunes. He didn't notice a thing as his computer's webcam started moving on its own, tilting at a creepy angle.

The red indicator on his webcam flipped to green without a sound. Suddenly, Clusia's national anthem thundered from the high-end speakers behind him. The masked man shot upright, panic flooding his wide eyes, his breakdown unmistakable on

screen.

As a hacker, he instantly realized someone had tracked him down through the network itself. 'No way! This can't be real. Since when did Clusia have hackers like this?' he thought.

The masked man kept telling himself it was just a coincidence and was about to shut off the speakers, but in the next moment, mixed with the symphony, a voice sliced through the air. It sounded cold, sharp, and absolutely terrifying.

The voice said: [You are dead meat!]

"Shit! Do you dare to face me head-on?" the masked man yelled, his face contorted with fury as he slammed his fists on the desk, throwing down the gauntlet from across the screen.

The moment the word "Sure" appeared, the screen split in two. The masked man glared from the left, while on the right, a slim figure in a black mask and baseball cap came into view, her presence sharp and intimidating.

"You hacked my computer?" the masked man asked, and his eyes narrowed, full of malice and disdain.

"Isn't that obvious?" Stella spat, not bothering to hide her contempt. Behind the mask, her reply was cold and cocky, with that unmistakable hacker swagger. Thanks to the voice changer, the masked man could only tell that she was a woman, nothing more.

2/3

"A woman? You're a woman?" the masked man asked in disbelief. He'd been hunted down by a woman, and not just any woman, but one from Clusia, the last

place he'd ever respect. Under his mask, his face contorted in ugly disbelief and fury.

From under the shadow of her black baseball cap, Stella answered with a low, scornful laugh, cool and dismissive, matching his contempt beat for beat.

“Are you laughing at me?” the masked man asked as he shoved his face right up to the webcam, tilting his head, trying to size her up through the screen.

“You think you can tear into my country and get away with it? I'll hit back just as hard,” Stella snapped.

Stella sat there, head dipped in that signature lazy way, a bloodthirsty glint flickering at the corner of her eyes. The fighter in her was wide awake, cold and reckless, her whole vibe screaming danger.

She looked every bit the empress on her throne as if the whole world was hers to trample underfoot.

The masked man was about to say something, but Stella raised her hand in a lazy, dismissive wave, shutting him up before he could get a word out.

He followed her gesture and watched in horror as his computer screen, which had been idle, suddenly sprang to life. Streams from YouTube, TikTok, and other top global platforms popped up, and his hacker account auto-logged in.

The global livestream had already started before he realized what was happening. The masked man felt a cold sweat breaking out down his spine.

3/3

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 46**

## Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 46

### Chapter 46

“Lion, you’ve messed with the wrong person,” Stella said in a flawless, lazy, and mocking tone. When Stella exposed the masked man’s hacker codename, Lion’s eyes instantly went bloodshot with rage.

Lion was ranked fourth among hackers worldwide, and he was the boss of Cosmos Syndicate, the most elite hacker alliance

in Monterra.

He used to dominate the scene, with tens of millions of fans across several platforms. As soon as he started his stream, his die-hard fans rushed in, but they immediately sensed something was off. Lion seemed clueless that he was live.

Then, the iconic tune of the Clusia National Anthem started playing. All of Lion’s fans could see their idol hammering away at his keyboard, while his custom-built, pride-and-joy computer was out of his control.

“You bitch!” Lion shouted as he slammed his fist on the desk again, gasping for breath and staring wildly at the camera. His crazy, out-of-control look scared the hell out of his fans.

Stella’s lips, hidden behind her mask, curled into a faint, mocking smile. She watched with cold indifference as the world’s fourth-ranked hacker lost it, just like how he’d once arrogantly threatened people’s lives with his death command.

“There’s an old saying in Clusia: make an example of one to warn the rest. Today, you’re the example,” Stella said coolly.

As soon as she spoke, every smart device in Lion’s apartment that was connected to Wi-Fi started going haywire.

The high-end speakers and TV blared like something out of a horror movie, the lights flickered on and off like ghosts were messing with them, the AC switched between blasting hot and freezing cold, and even the faucets started running water on their own.

Lion tried to shut everything down, but nothing worked. In a fit of rage, he grabbed a chair and started smashing it into all the appliances in his apartment, leaving chaos in his wake. His fans in the livestream were left stunned, watching in disbelief.

[Are Clusia hackers really this badass?]

[What kind of trouble did Lion get himself into this time?]

The place was trashed. Panting heavily, Lion finally managed to quiet the chaos in his apartment, leaving everything in

ruins.

Lion grinned wickedly, “You really think you can mess with me? Do you even know who’s got my back?”

The Cosmos Syndicate had not reached the top of Monterra’s hacker world overnight. There were powerful hands operating behind the scenes. Lion believed that if Stella provoked them, she would never escape unscathed. And now, Stella laughed.

“I couldn’t care less about which country is backing you, or who you think is pulling strings for you. But let me make one thing clear. Sebastian of the Gray family is not someone you can touch without paying the price,” Stella said coldly.

As soon as she finished, her smile faded, and her gaze turned cold and ruthless, like a gangster sizing up his prey. ‘He dared to make a move on Sebastian today. Now he can deal with the fallout himself, Stella thought.

At that moment, Haliville Hospital was silent. The patients’ families, who had been gripped by fear, now watched as the once-arrogant hacker was humiliated, looking like a wreck. All their pent-up frustration vanished, replaced by pure relief and satisfaction.

Out in the hallway outside the hospital room, Carlos was stunned by what he saw. Sophia, usually the picture of gentle composure, had her usual mask slip. Her real emotions flickered across her face for once, stormy and conflicted.

Who the hell was sticking their nose in Sophia fumed inside. ‘All that act was for nothing. Because of the voice changer, nobody suspected the masked girl was Stella.

1/3

Stella barely glanced at the commotion outside. She was totally focused on the screen in front of her and Lion. Suddenly, six encrypted files flashed onto the screen, visible to everyone.

They looked like resumes, but some sections had been blacked out, likely because the information was too sensitive to be disclosed.

[What's up with those blacked-out sections?]

[This feels major.]

[No way, is that Lion's real info?]

"I've got the personal info of six core members of the Cosmos Syndicate hacker alliance," Stella's voice was icy. Lion was stunned into silence.

Under his mask, Lion's face was slick with cold sweat. Everyone in Cosmos Syndicate lived in the shadows, would do anything for a buck, and after all the dirty work they'd done, the last thing they wanted was their personal info leaking out.

"How do I know you're not bluffing?" Lion snapped, refusing to back down.

The Cosmos Syndicate was the top hacker crew, and every one of its core members was a legend in the scene. There was no way anyone could break in and expose them as if it were child's play.

Stella smirked, keeping quiet. She tapped the spacebar, and the last file's blacked-out sections disappeared, laying everything bare. It was Cosmos Syndicate's sixth core manager. Lion's eyes went wide with terror.

It felt like a noose was tightening around his neck. Someone commented: [Holy shit, check the news!]

Almost the instant that comment appeared, Lion's phone started ringing. Barely a minute after the info dropped, that sixth core member was already taken out at home.

"What do you want?" Lion managed to ask.

Only now did Lion truly understand what kind of monster he had provoked. For the first time in his life, death felt so close he could almost taste it. His breathing grew shallow, and a numbing cold spread through his entire body.

“I want you to answer a question live on stream,” Stella replied, her voice casual, almost lazy.

She rested her chin on one hand, radiating an effortless, streetwise swagger. But with the voice changer, her words rang out like the tolling of a death bell, signaling the end was near for everyone watching.

“Seven years ago, about that Eelware program killed thirty-five thousand people worldwide, was that Cosmos Syndicate’s doing?” Stella asked.

Back then, Eelware threw the whole world into chaos, hacking into people’s pacemakers and frying their hearts in three seconds flat. Lion stared, lost for words, his mind racing.

Stella didn’t even bother to push him. She coolly unlocked the fifth core member’s info, her indifference sharper than a knife.

Lion’s eyes darted everywhere, panic written all over his face. “No, it wasn’t,” he stammered, voice shaking.

The chat on YouTube and TikTok went quiet in unison. All those fans who used to hype him up suddenly clammed up, not daring to say a word.

Stella snickered. “Congrats, you got it wrong.”

As Stella hit the spacebar again, a video from seven years ago popped up. Cosmos Syndicate’s six core members, all with wild, cocky grins plastered on their faces, were popping champagne and celebrating as if they owned the world.

2/3

And just like that, the black bars over the last four members’ info vanished, laying it all bare for the world to see.

“From this moment on, Cosmos Syndicate is history. The hacke scene is about to be turned upside down,” Stella declared. Staring at Lion, who now looked like a beaten cur, Stella’s tone was pure ice.

“I’ve used these exact methods to humiliate people from countries all over the globe,” Lion shouted. He tore off his mask, his face drained of all color, but the hatred in his eyes burned so fiercely that it leapt off the screen.

“The second you mouthed off at Mr. Gray, you basically volunteered to be the sacrificial lamb,” Stella said.

Her voice, warped by the voice changer, rang out for all to hear. Anyone who messed with Sebastian was as good as dead.

“Big Ben.” Stella said flatly. Big Ben didn’t hesitate and covered Lucas’s eyes, shielding him from what was about to happen.

A gunshot echoed from the far side of the screen. Lion fell dead where he stood, and the livestream cut out without warning.

Stella pulled off her baseball cap, and her long hair fell in a shiny stunning wave that left everyone speechless.

The hospita determi

was silent. Everyone stared with their mouths agape, still reeling from the shock and struggling to her what they had witnessed was real or merely a dream.

3/3

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 47**

Read Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 47 -

### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 47**

## Chapter 47

Big Ben set off a burst of colorful confetti. Lucas reached out his tiny hand to Stella, looking adorable. His eyes sparkled, and his little face was full of eagerness for a high-five.

Sebastian's gaze darkened. His phone rang incessantly, but he paid no attention. He watched as Stella bent down to give Lucas a high-five, her long, well-defined fingers twitching slightly.

Nathan felt the chill of Sebastian's icy mood radiating from him. Stella pulled down her black mask with a confident, badass swagger, utterly destroying his first impression of her as a fragile girl.

No one would expect a seemingly fragile girl to hack an international satellite in under three seconds, face off with Cosmos Syndicate, and climb to the very top of the hacker rankings all on her own.

Clearly, he'd been using the word "fragile" all wrong. Something seemed to click for Stella, and she glanced up at Charles, her eyes half-narrowed, clearly thinking something over.

Charles had been around for decades, but he'd never felt this kind of danger before.

Before Stella could say a word, he rushed to promise, "I swear I won't breathe a word about what happened today." Hearing his vow, Stella chilled out again, back to her usual easygoing self.

"I beefed up your hospital's security system," Stella said.

While she was erasing the death command Lion had planted, Stella had also reinforced the firewalls for every hospital in Haliville to make sure nothing like today could ever happen again. Not that she felt like bragging about it.

Charles was about to press for more details when Stella's phone rang. Without missing a beat, she snapped her ultra-thin laptop shut and slid it right back into Big Ben's soft, squishy belly as if she'd done it a thousand times.

The others fell silent, stunned. Finally, they understood where the laptop had been stashed. The caller ID showed Aunt Vera. Stella chuckled, effortlessly composed, and answered the call.

“Tomorrow at three, go to Nova Mall and let your cousin help you pick out some clothes. There’s a party on Saturday, and you’re coming with me,” Vera said, hanging up before Stella could even reply.

Stella toyed with her phone, a playful glint in her eyes. Vera had married into the Morris family, one of Haliville’s well-known wealthy families. Her cousin Lila was close to Hazel and had been giving Stella a hard time since they were kids.

Her family never missed a chance to get Hazel in with the rich and powerful. But now, Vera wanted to help her pick out clothes and even take her to a party.

‘People don’t do favors out of the blue. There must be a catch, Stella thought.

“Who was it?” Sebastian asked coolly.

“It was Aunt Vera. She said she’s taking me shopping for clothes tomorrow, and then to a party on Saturday,” Stella replied.

Stella gave a small, relaxed smile and casually shoved her phone back into her pocket. With all that edge gone, she looked almost like a regular student.

“The party on Saturday?” John repeated. He looked like he’d remembered something, his already stone-cold face turning icier. Sebastian shot him a frosty glare.

“Mr. Gray, it’s the Lane family’s party,” John said and glanced at Stella, hesitated.

Stella gave a cool nod, urging him to continue. Something about the situation felt off, and she couldn’t help but wonder what the Lane family’s deal was.

1/3

John said, “The Lane family’s only son is bisexual, loves to party and fool around. He was diagnosed with HIV, and now they’re desperate to marry him off before the news spreads.”

As soon as he finished, the temperature in the room seemed to drop, and Sebastian looked ready to explode.

“The Lane family sent invites to every family in Haliville with a daughter they think is suitable,” John added.

The Lane family was casting a wide net, but the Carter family was both clueless and conniving. Lucas’s soft, chubby face scrunched up with anxiety as he gripped Stella’s sleeve tightly, refusing to let go.

Stella started to speak, but out of nowhere, a crushing wave of panic crashed over her, so intense that it felt like she was drowning. Her face went pale, and her brows drew tight in distress.

As her vision blurred and she slipped into unconsciousness, the last thing she saw was Sebastian reaching out his hand toward her.

Stella felt like she had been caught in a long, endless dream. In that dream, she came face-to-face with another version of herself, wearing the old, exaggerated punk makeup, tears silently streaming down her face.

When the other Stella noticed her looking, she reached out and pushed open a door between them. A soft, milky light enveloped them both.

A sudden, stabbing headache crashed over Stella, and her long-empty memories returned in a powerful wave, bringing back the experiences of both versions of herself at the same time.

Stella had endured abuse from the Carter family from a young age, Camilla being especially cruel. If Stella wasn’t yelled at, she was hit.

On one occasion, merely for touching Hazel’s piano, Camilla broke two of Stella’s fingers. Bruises covered almost her entire body, except for her face.

Day after day, Stella learned to stay under the radar. She piled on heavy makeup, skipped class whenever she could, and used her part-time earnings to pay for extra lessons, all in hopes of surviving until the college exams. Then a kidnapping shattered her world.

In her dream, Lucas was strangled to death in front of her that very day. Her hands, feet, and ribs were broken, and she endured unspeakable torture. Her family didn’t bother calling the police. It wasn’t until Sebastian’s people barged in that anyone took action.

By the time help arrived, the places where Stella's hands and feet had been broken were so rotten that maggots were wriggling inside. Sebastian told Jake to get her to the hospital, and he made sure not a single word about what happened got out.

Stella's life was in shambles, but Hazel swaggered right up to her hospital bed, all smug and superior, bragging that someone had witnessed everything, but she'd made sure they didn't call the police.

Hazel flat-out confessed she did it on purpose. Even in the dream, Stella could feel that tidal wave of hatred crashing through her.

As for the Gray family, Annette suffered a fatal heart attack the moment she heard Lucas was gone. On the day of her burial, at the Gray Family Cemetery, a raging fire broke out, and everyone lost their lives in the blaze.

Sebastian set the fire and died there as well. Stella only heard about it after she was discharged and returned to the Carter family, and the news was inescapable.

That same evening, Camilla and Vera forced her to go to the Lane family's party, where they worked together to push her onto David's bed.

2/3

The version of Stella with heavy punk makeup, tears streaming down her face. Then, she struck a match, and the world around her instantly ignited.

Stella and her other self stood face-to-face, wild flames roaring all around them. The other Stella said, "I won't accept this."

The other Stella kept chanting the words over and over, her defiance like gasoline, fueling a fire so intense that it turned the sky crimson. Across from her, Stella, her head pounding, suddenly snapped her eyes open.

Icy, lethal energy surged from her as she regained all her memories. Everything she had believed about her second chance was wrong. She wasn't Stella at all, but Shark.

The one and only freelance surgeon with a flawless, internationally certified record, ranked number one in the world. The mastermind behind Scorpio Syndicate. And that was only the beginning.

With a cold, undeniably badass tone, Stella said, “Want to take it back?” She didn’t care if it meant vanishing forever. She was letting the real Stella decide.

Because, in the end, this body belonged to the real Stella. The fire faded away around them. At some point, her tears had stopped, and her lips parted, as if she was about to speak.

3/3

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 48**

Read Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 48 -

### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 48**

Chapter 48

and the necklace. Stella said before she faded away into thin air, vanishing like a spark in the night.

That former version of Stella was gone for good. The new Stella opened her eyes, feeling as if a weighty curse had been shed, and energy rushed through her, but upon meeting those midnight-dark eyes, she instantly regained her calm.

Nathan, you quack? Allan shouted. His voice cut through the air making Stella instinctively frown.

Sharp Sebastian snapped His voice was like a thunderclap, heavy with authority.

The room fell silent. Only then did Stella realize she was back on Sandridge Island. She sat up and looked at Sebastian. His hips were pressed into a thin, icy line, as if he was holding back a storm inside.

As she was about to speak, two big heads popped up from the side.

Stella, are you okay? Allan asked, his eyes glued to her, looking every bit the spoiled rich kid.

Tim fine.” Stella answered, her voice slightly hoarse. She had fused with her former self, undergoing a complete change.

Allan shot a glance at Sebastian and couldn’t shake the feeling that something about Stella had changed since she woke up.

“Where is Lucas Stella asked, scanning the area, but the little guy who was always with her was nowhere in sight. The emptiness brought her back to that haunting dream. If she hadn’t changed, Lucas would have been left to die in that old warehouse.

No one answered. Stella shot Allan a look, expecting a response, but he just avoided her gaze and turned away.

“Mr. Gray?” she asked as her heart dropped, her voice tense.

Your collapse shook him up,” Sebastian said, and before he finished speaking, Stella threw off the covers and headed straight for the kids room.

When Stella stepped into the kids room, she was taken aback to find it spotless, with no mess in sight, as if no one had ever been there. But a crowd had gathered around the wardrobe.

As soon as Stella appeared, the maids instinctively stepped aside to let her through. She headed straight for the wardrobe.

Lucas, normally chubby and adorable, sat on Snowball’s back like a little king on his throne, hugging his knees and staring blankly ahead. He didn’t respond to anything around him, not even a blink. He was zoned out, as though someone had turned him off.

Snowball was baring his fangs and hissing like a monster, daring anyone to come close to his little master. The sight was so terrifying that it scared the living daylight out of the maids, who shrieked and scrambled back.

“Everyone out,” Stella said coolly, her face pale and blank as ever. The room instantly went quiet.

“Ms. Carter, Nathan began, but trailed off. He was one of the top hypnotherapists, but he had met his match with this uncle- nephew pair.

Stella didn’t spare him a glance. She crouched down beside the wardrobe. Lucas didn’t move. Sebastian sat quietly in his black wheelchair. Truth was, this was the real Lucas, who was shut off, locked away in his own world, refusing to connect with anyone outside.

“Easy, Snowball,” Stella said softly, giving Snowball a gentle pat on the head. The huge python, who’d been all worked up moments before, instantly mellowed out, pressing its massive head into her palm like a big, sulky puppy.

Snowball looked almost pitiful as it snuggled up, and Nathan couldn’t believe his eyes. Lucas had rescued Snowball from the

13

But despite his size. Snowball was crazy smart and fiercely loyal to Lucas. When it came to hunting, it was a savage beast, and even the maids had to toss food from a safe distance.

When Snowball got mean, he’d turn on anyone, except Lucas and Sebastian. Lucas still didn’t move a muscle.

Stella extended her hand, gently wrapped her fingers around Lucas’s tiny one, and held it close to her heart. In the stillness. her heartbeat was loud and clear.

The chubby little Lucas blinked slowly, his eyes heavy and unfocused. As his eyelids fluttered shut, tiny tears fell from his lashes, landing softly on the back of Stella’s hand. Each drop seemed to sting her heart with its warmth.

He cried without a sound, so quiet and obedient, just like a little puppy that had been abandoned and finally found its way home.

Finally, a faint spark lit up in Lucas’s eyes. His little mouth moved without a sound, but Stella knew what he was trying to

say.

He mouthed, “I’ll be a good boy. Stella, please don’t die.”

Stella reached in and gently lifted Lucas out of the wardrobe. The moment she held him, he buried his face in the crook of her neck, his tiny arms wrapping tightly around her, his whole body trembling.

Allan watched, deep in thought. He already knew everything that had gone down at the hospital.

Lucas's attachment to Stella was undeniable, and even Sebastian seemed to have changed because of her. With these two things in mind, it no longer mattered whether the Stella he was investigating was a different person from the one standing

there now.

After his bath, Lucas sat on the bed, looking all cute and well-behaved. Big Ben was quietly charging in the corner, his blue chest light blinking on and off.

"Give it a try," Stella said, strapping the newly upgraded black digital watch onto Lucas's wrist and gesturing for him to give it a poke. Lucas blinked and then tapped the screen.

Still charging, Big Ben called out, "Lucas smells fresh and clean after his bath. Stella, hug time!"

Lucas mouthed a silent "Wow", and at the same time, Big Ben echoed, "Wow!"

The whole scene was so magical that even Snowball, who was lazily coiled on the floor, lifted its huge head and gave Big Ben a look, its little red eyes full of mystery. Lucas tapped the watch again.

Big Ben continued, "Snowball, what are you thinking about?"

Lucas looked up at Stella with big, starry eyes, his chubby cheeks so adorable that they could melt anyone's heart.

Stella sat on the floor, resting her chin in her hand, looking completely relaxed. She waved at Snowball, and it slithered over, its heavy body dragging behind, and then placed the tip of its white tail in her palm.

"Easy there," Stella said as she pulled out the pink wool collar she'd fixed up while Lucas was bathing, fastened it around Snowball's neck, and turned it on. The pet translator booted up.

Snowball: "Big Ben is so cute. I want to eat him up." Lucas and Stella were left speechless.

While still talking, Snowball slithered over to Big Ben and gently put Big Ben's round head in its mouth.

2/3

Big Ben shouted, “Whoa, I’m getting gobbled up.” Lucas and Stella were at a loss for words.

Finally, after a bit of chaos, Stella managed to rescue Big Ben from Snowball’s jaws. As she did, something tumbled out of her pocket. It was a chunky black men’s digital watch.

Lucas scooped it up for her, looked up all sweet and obedient, and handed it over. Then he poked the watch curiously.

Big Ben started. “Uncle Sebastian carried Stella all the way back.

Stella took the watch from Lucas in silence, but her mind kept replaying that dream. Sebastian, left all alone after losing Lucas and Annette, set everything ablaze in the graveyard.

Back in that other world, Sebastian suffered endlessly, his body falling apart piece by piece. He had given up on life long ago. The decision to set himself on fire in that graveyard, all alone, weighed heavily on him.

It was late at night. A medical charter flight from Jaffina was about to touch down at Haliville Airport.

3/3

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Chapter 49

Haliville Airport had already locked down the passageways, keeping a tight watch.

Caleb Martin, dressed to the nines, was standing beside two silver-haired elders. The man who usually called all the shots now looked more like an assistant than the boss he usually was. nily was there too, waiting for her teacher.

It was Sammel, famed as one of the best surgeons, both at home and abroad. Everyone looked serious, especially the two

elders.

“Is there really nothing we can do?” Victor said. His brows were tightly knit, his whole aura heavy with authority. He was waiting for Paul, once the undisputed master of acupuncture in the country.

Just days ago. Paul’s top student turned his back on him and crippled the hand he relied on for acupuncture. The Penn’s Acupuncture Mastery was on the verge of being lost forever.

“Even Samuel has been brought in as a last resort. What do you think?” Landen said, the other person of the legendary Two Pillars of the Medical World.

Landen hadn’t relaxed his frown since stepping into the airport, if Victor were a decorated expert in nuclear physics, Landen would be one of the best medicine gurus. This time, he’d brought along the Trent family’s secret remedy, the famous Vitalis Pill

Swallowing this pill can bring someone back from the brink of death, even if they’re already halfway in the grave.

As they spoke, the private jet landed. The team from Jaffina Training Base immediately went on high alert. When Samuel and the medical staff from Jaffina wheeled out Paul, who was unconscious, everyone held their breath.

“Mr. Miles, Emily called out, hurrying over in her sharp suit to support Samuel.

Samuel nodded, but his hand was shaking so badly that he could barely control it.

“Samuel?” Landen said as he stared at the trembling hand, his expression changing dramatically.

“My hands are ruined. I’ll never be able to perform surgery again” Samuel said.

Samuel had stepped away from surgery years ago because of nerve damage. He forced himself back for Paul, but his hands gave out before he could finish. Now, he was truly done. The shock hit everyone hard.

Emily’s eyes instantly filled with tears as she stammered, “Mr. Miles.”

“Where’s the pill?” Samuel demanded urgently, his face growing grim as he looked at Landen. Paul’s condition was critical, and he needed the Vitalis Pill to keep him alive.

“It’s here,” Landen quickly pulled out the box containing the Vitalis Pill, broke the seal, and opened it.

“Landen, your pill...” Samuel stammered, and his expression suddenly changed.

Instead of the pill, there was just a lump of mud inside. When Landen saw it, he nearly had a heart attack right there.

Cold sweat broke out all over Landen. The Vitalis Pill was gone. Someone had switched it. Paul had been rushed to Haliville for this pill, and his life depended on it. The silence was suffocating.

“So what do we do now?” a man asked. He was in his twenties, and he’d stuck close to Paul ever since they got off the plane.

His voice was rough but pleasant, and even though it was late, he still wore sunglasses and a mask, as if he were hiding from

the world.

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 49**

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Chapter 49.

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No one answered. Without the pill to keep Paul breathing, he probably wouldn't make it through the night. And if Paul were gone, the Penn's Acupuncture Mastery would vanish for good.

"Isn't there anything else we can do?" Victor asked. Victor, who was always rock-solid, suddenly coughed twice, his voice trembling. He couldn't stand there and watch his old friend die right in front of him. There had to be another way.

"Where can I buy another Vitalis Pill? I'll pay whatever it takes," the masked man demanded, desperation clear in his voice. Even behind the sunglasses, his eyes were red and raw.

"This was the only one in all of Clusia," Landen said.

The recipe for the Vitalis Pill still existed, but a few of the key herbs had gone extinct in Clusia. There was no sign of them anywhere, wild or farmed.

Even if those herbs could somehow be found, the process of making the pill was complicated, with such a low success rate that not a single pill might result from ten thousand attempts.

Even if it could be made, Paul's condition was far too critical to wait that long.

"Is there really no other way?" the man burst out.

Suddenly, he tore off his sunglasses, revealing a face so beautiful that it was almost unreal, with a gentle charm that made him unforgettable. It was Callum Lawson, the most popular actor in the country right now.

Caleb was left speechless. He'd never imagined that the country's biggest star would have anything to do with Paul.

"If Paul were awake, and if nothing had happened to him, maybe we could use golden needles to lock down his blood flow. But..." Samuel said.

He stared at Paul, lying motionless on the hospital bed, and for the first time, he finally understood what it meant to be helpless. He couldn't fix Paul's hand, and now, he might not even be able to keep him alive.

"So all it takes is using golden needles to lock down his blood flow?" Emily asked, her voice uncertain. Everyone's eyes snapped at her, surprised by her sudden question.

“It’s not that simple. In all of Clusia, Paul’s the only one who could pierce a steel plate with a needle as thin as a strand of hair, all with his inner strength. You know how insanely tough the human skull is, right?” Samuel said.

Samuel’s expression was serious. Even though he didn’t get why his top student was suddenly asking, he still broke it down. for her, step by step.

Emily’s lips parted, then pressed together, and parted again. She was clearly torn up inside, struggling with a difficult. decision.

“And what after we seal his blood flow?” she asked quietly.

Samuel sighed deeply and replied, “Unless we can find Shark, there’s still a glimmer of hope. Otherwise, all we can do is leave it up to fate.”

The mood was heavy. Emily pressed her lips together, her mind drifting to another possibility she couldn’t shake.

She was still hesitating. If that person were dragged in and failed, even if no one said anything, it would still have an impact on that person. But Emily couldn’t bear to let Paul die.

“I know someone who might be able to help,” Emily finally blurted out.

On Sandridge Island, Stella stood casually outside Sebastian’s bedroom door, absentmindedly fiddling with a black men’s

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digital watch. Her indifferent gaze shifted in the shadowy corridor, making it impossible to guess what was running through her mind.

Inside the room, Nathan was updating Sebastian about Paul being sent to Haliville tonight, and he spilled everything, right down to the Vitalis Pill

“If Paul can’t pull through. Mr. Gray, will you intervene?” Nathan asked.

He spoke not for the Trent family, but for himself alone. Sebastian, just out of the shower, sat in his wheelchair and fixed him with a cold, unyielding stare, offering no reply.

As if he sensed something. Sebastian looked past Nathan toward the door. There was a knock at the door.

“Come in.” Sebastian said, his voice cold and flat. Stella stepped inside, about to say something, but Nathan’s phone suddenly started ringing like crazy. It was Landen, Nathan’s grandfather.

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## **Paid To Care, Destined To Conquer Novel Chapter 50**

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### **Echoes Of Forgotten Dreams - 50**

Chapter 50

Chapter 50

Nathan glanced at Sebastian, but got no response. Feeling a bit felpless, he gave Stella a polite nod and stepped out of the

room to take the call.

Sebastian shifted his wheelchair, his eyes icy and sharp. “You have moderate anemia,” he said.

“I see. Stella replied with a careless shrug. Considering how her mily had looked after her, moderate anemia was no shock. Seeing her so nonchalant, Sebastian’s gaze grew darker, and the air in the room grew colder.

Stella was spaced out and didn’t notice the chill in the room. As she reached into her pocket for her black digital watch, she caught a glimpse of the men’s watch Sebastian had tossed carelessly onto the table.

It was a Richard Mille, priced from a million onward. Stella immediately discarded the idea of offering her watch. Beside his, her cheap digital watch looked childish. Nothing improved a man's appearance like a fine watch.

Stella was still weighing her options when John knocked and walked in, his face serious.

"Mr. Gray, the dock has been locked down," John reported immediately after getting the news. "It's Red Shadow"

Red Shadow was the most mysterious special forces training base in Jaffina, a name that sent chills down anyone's spine.

The instructors there were absolute nightmares, and anyone tough enough to survive came out as top brass in the military. Few people knew that Sebastian's entire inner circle came straight from Red Shadow.

"Something has happened to Paul," Sebastian said, his fingers moving slightly. His sickly pale face contrasted with the black shirt, a subtle scent of prayer beads lingering around him. He remained composed and dangerous. Nathan returned, his murderous aura undeniable, confirming Sebastian's warning.

"Someone switched out the Vitalis Pill," Nathan said. That was the only Vitalis Pill in all of Clusia.

Stella's laid-back expression didn't change, but she arched her brow slightly. She thought, 'Vitalis Pill? Is it really that special?'

Sebastian's phone rang. It was Caleb. Over at the dock, Caleb was visibly anxious, Sw bullets as he dialed.

Normally, they stay out of each other's business. Ever since Caleb became mayor of Haliville, the former mayor personally warned him against provoking Sebastian, because doing so would invite major trouble.

But this was urgent, and he had no choice but to grit his teeth and the

Fortunately, Sebastian picked up.

Caleb delivered the full report in record time, leaving nothing unsaid. Sebastian's silence on the other end caused beads of sweat to form. The others waited silently,

particularly the Red Shadow operatives, whose deadly presence could freeze anyone in their tracks.

“Hand the phone to the person in charge of Red Shadow,” Sebastian said, his voice calm but with an edge that made Caleb shiver.

Caleb handed over the phone, his face twisted in worry. The person in charge took it with icy indifference, but whatever Sebastian said on the other end made his expression change in an instant.

Caleb watched, stunned, as sweat started to bead and roll down the man’s forehead.

“Understood,” the man replied as he gestured for his men to withdraw. Caleb was left standing there, totally lost.

But of course, no one was going to fill him in. By the time Caleb got his phone back, the call was already cut off. Ten minutes later, a black Maybach glided out into the night.

Its streamlined body moved through the darkness like a hawk on the hunt, radiating menace and intense pressure. The

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blackened-out windows absorbed all light, a testament to the power of whoever sat inside.

Without lowering the window, the driver tapped the horn, silently demanding the road be cleared.

Inside the car, a silent standoff was underway. Nathan sat there in silence, thinking he should’ve crawled under the car instead of sitting there.

“I’m not drinking that,” Stella said, her usual cool face showing obvious distaste. She turned away, acting like she didn’t see the tumbler being offered. The hands holding it were slender, with a string of black prayer beads wrapped around the wrist.

Inside was beef stew, simmered for hours. Sebastian didn’t say anything and kept his hand

Still holding the thermos.

Stella's expression was cold and impatient. She shot him a look and muttered, "Ugh, it's going to be way too gamey."

"It's not." Sebastian replied.

Nathan sat there, feeling totally invisible. He grumbled inwardly 'Seriously, is anyone even aware I'm still here?'

"Just drink some," Sebastian said, his voice icy and emotionless. Sounded more like a command than a request, as if he'd never said anything like this before.

"I'm not drinking it," Stella shot back.

"Just one sip." Sebastian said after a brief pause, lowering his demand.

Stella was getting annoyed, her brows knitting in irritation. "Just one sip?" she asked.

"Yeah," Sebastian replied. With Nathan gaping in disbelief, Sebastian opened the tumbler, his gaze cool and knowing, and with an expressionless face, brought the spoon right up to her lips.

Nathan was floored, and he thought, 'Seriously? Is Sebastian treating her like his own kid? Actually spoon-feeding her?'

Stella frowned and opened her mouth, bracing for the nasty, gamey taste of the beef. To her surprise, the stew was silky smooth and sweet. She found it surprisingly delicious, and all the cold annoyance inside her melted away.

"Go on," Sebastian said to Nathan, though his eyes stayed fixed on Stella.

Nathan took a deep breath and said, "The plan was to use the Vitalis Pill instead of gold-needle acupuncture to stabilize Paul's energy and life force through the danger zone. But now the pill is gone."

"So now we have to find someone who can use a gold needle to prevent Paul's energy from draining too quickly. But in all of Clusia, besides Paul himself, who else could pierce the top of the head with a single needle?" Nathan continued.

Nathan sighed, remarking that even doctors could not treat themselves. John, who was driving, glanced at Stella in the rearview mirror, his lips twitching as if he wanted to say something, but he remained silent.

“But my grandfather said Emily recommended someone for the job. Just no clue who it was,” Nathan muttered. Nathan sighed, glancing around the silent car. Not a single person bothered to answer his question.

“Is the Vitalis Pill really that special?” Stella said lazily, barely looking up, clearly not caring much about it.

“There’s only one of its kind in all of Clusia. Surely that makes it rare,” Nathan said, a smile of disbelief forming as her nonchalance irritated him.

Stella froze, spoon in hand. ‘The only one? Who decided that?’ she wondered, not buying it for a second.

Thanks to the city escort, the group reached the hospital in record time. Stella had just finished her beef stew, and her usually pale face finally showed a hint of healthy color.

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## Chapter 50

The black Maybach pulled up to the hospital entrance. Outside, Emily, dressed in a white coat, stood beside her teacher, Samuel and Nathan’s grandfather, Landden. There was also a familiar face among them.

It was Berry: Victor’s bodyguard. “Thanks for the ride tonight, A. Gray Henry said.

Sporting tanden approaching through the window, Nathan thanked Sebastian, pushed open the door, and hurried out to greet him.

Grandpa, Nathan called out, but before he could finish. Landengwept right past him at surprising speed and planted himself in front of the car. Nathan was left blinking in confusion

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