

## **Arabella 1831**

### Chapter 1831

"Maybe there's one person who can save her," The leading doctor uttered the name with a trembling voice, "Dr. Bell."

"Yes, Dr. Bell's almost a miracle, accurate and effective with treatments. If only Dr. Bell gets involved, there isn't a problem that can't be solved."

The other doctors nodded in agreement, "I heard that Phillip was practically on the verge of death until Dr. Bell brought him back."

"They say Dr. Bell can even cure people in a vegetative state.!"

All the renowned doctors had heard of Dr. Bell's incredible skills. But none of them knew who he really was, his age, or what kind of history he had with Serena.

Martin's gaze dimmed at the mention of Dr. Bell. Wasn't that the Collins family's real daughter, Arabella?

How could she possibly want to save Serena.

"But Dr. Bell's whereabouts are a mystery, nobody knows where he is, even if he's alive or not."

"True, any information on his location is scarce."

"Serena's running out of time, Mr. Cooper. You should spend as much time with her as you can."

"They say Phillip was saved mostly because Dr. Bell just happened to be passing by his room."

It was pure luck for Phillip; otherwise, finding Dr. Bell would be like searching for a needle in a haystack.

After speaking their piece, the doctors bowed their heads regretfully and left.

Martin watched with wide eyes as the nurses wheeled out the gurney with the frail girl whose breath was fading.

Seeing his beloved being taken to the ICU, Martin's hand shook while he unlocked the phone that Erik had entrusted to him before being captured.

This was the phone Erik used daily. When Martin had caught him, Erik discovered himself fallen in a trap but didn't blame him; he only asked Martin to do two things: to take care of Serena, ensuring her safety and happiness, and to give the phone to Serena when she woke up.

Now, without Serena's consent, he opened Erik's contacts to find Arabella's number.

He punched Arabella's number into his own phone and dialed it immediately.

Arabella didn't pick up; she was in the middle of an autopsy, and unexpectedly uncovered some clues.

Sean couldn't find his sister anywhere. It seemed odd to him that Hans hadn't stayed with her but spent a long time talking with their parents in the master bedroom instead. So, Sean knocked on the bedroom door.

Hans, just about to leave, opened the door to find Sean looking for their sister.

"Where's sis?" Sean's first question was about his sister's whereabouts as he glanced inside, "What have you been talking about for so long?"

"Come with me." Hans led him to a secluded spot before revealing the news of Erik's death.

Sean's eyes widened in shock, "You mean sis is performing an autopsy on him?"

The thought of his sister doing something as gruesome and terrifying as an autopsy stuck him—and without an assistant?

"Her skills even surpass those of someone as skilled as Clark."

Hearing Hans' words, Sean was stunned. What kind of prodigy was his sister, capable of everything!

"I'm going to check on her, keep this under wraps, don't let word get out."

No sooner had Hans left; Sean hurriedly followed, "Wait for me."

He, too, wanted to see how his sister managed an autopsy.

Chapter 1832

Down in the basement of Reflections Villa, Hans and Sean stood before a bank of monitors, their gazes fixed on the grace of their little sister as she wielded a scalpel with an expertise that belied her years.

Once again, they marveled at her medical prowess and steely nerves.

Most girls would've been petrified at the sight of such a scene.

But there she was, calm and methodical, looking for all the world like a seasoned veteran who'd spent decades in an operating room.

The most surprising part? She was every bit as confident as she was beautiful, as intelligent as she was capable.

Their very own sister—such a girl was a real gem in the Collins family. It seemed the heavens had been overly generous to them.

They waited in silence at the monitors, not wanting to interrupt her dissection, only appearing once she had finished.

"Our own sister, a genuine prodigy. Is there anything you can't do?" Sean said, ruffling Arabella's hair

affectionately as she emerged from the room. "You tired? I'll brew you some coffee."

"Well done," Hans said, surprised at how quickly she had completed the task. Her slight smile hinted at promising leads.

"Hans, Sean, let's discuss this upstairs," Arabella suggested, wary of prying ears.

She instructed two servants to stand guard outside the room where Erik's body lay.

The servants were uneasy, not only because guarding a dead body wasn't exactly comforting, but also because they worried about the body decomposing.

"I've applied preservatives. There's no need to worry about decay for a week," Arabella assured them.

"Don't let anyone in except for us."

"Yes, Miss."

Though they were frightened, they would fulfill Arabella's orders without fail.

No sooner had Arabella left the basement than her phone vibrated with another incoming call—from an unfamiliar number.

She didn't plan to answer until the screen showed 11 missed calls from the same number, and almost immediately, the 12th call came through.

Only then did she pick up, her voice cool and detached. "Who's this?"

"Arabella, it's Martin."

Perhaps fearing she would hang up immediately, Martin hastily added, "Please, don't hang up."

"I won't save her," Arabella cut in, likely anticipating the reason for the call.

Martin's voice became more urgent, "Arabella, I know Serena has done unforgivable things, hurt you. I

have no right to ask this of you, no right to even call you, but the doctors are helpless."

He choked up then.

"They say Serena's wound is badly infected; the bacteria have entered her bloodstream, causing

sepsis. Her organs are failing. Can't you help? Please, save her. I'm begging you. Whatever you want,

I'll give it to you."

He'd give everything he owned—his savings, shares, resources—whatever it took, as long as he had it,

he'd hand it over.

"What I want, I can get myself. Besides, with the support of my family and Romeo, there's nothing I

can't access in this world," replied Arabella, her tone dripping with conviction. "To me, you have no

value. You've clearly asked the wrong person. I have no interest in helping you—Serena's fate is irrelevant to me."

Chapter 1833

Martin's voice became desperately urgent as he spoke, "Arabella, they say saving a life is the greatest deed, greater than building the grandest cathedral. You're a healer at heart, and if you could save her, I'll agree to any terms you set!"

"I know when you returned to your birth family, Serena didn't welcome you with open arms. Instead, she provoked and hurt you over and over. She was wrong, truly wrong. I realize that saying 'I'm sorry' a thousand times over won't undo the pain she's caused you, but I can't just stand by and watch her die.

Please, Arabella, you can direct all your anger at me. I'll beg on my knees, crawl if I have to, just to save her life."

His voice was choked with emotion, barely recognizable.

"The doctors say her body's vital functions and organs, all have been seriously affected, though to varying degrees. I'm out of options."

Hearing this, Arabella simply said, "I gave her plenty of chances, and she squandered each one. She tried to take my life, time and again. Who was there to save me then?"

Had it not been for her quick thinking and timely avoidance, Arabella couldn't know how many times she might have died by Serena's hand.

"Her condition isn't a big problem for me to fix, but I won't save her." Arabella's voice was cold and detached throughout. "All your kneeling and pleading won't make a difference. The problem isn't with you; it's with her."

If Serena hadn't harbored such malice from the start, if she hadn't schemed behind Arabella's back repeatedly, Arabella might have considered her salvation.

But Serena was cruel enough to try and carve her hatred into Arabella's skin, to wish a gruesome death upon her.

Why save someone like that?

Was she supposed to set a trap for herself?

Arabella ended the call without another word, not willing to waste her breath.

Hans and Sean showed concern. "Was that Martin?" they asked.

"He has the audacity to ask for your help?" Sean was itching to teach Martin a lesson.



"He must be really desperate to come to me," Arabella admitted, feeling a twinge of sympathy for him.

"His love is wasted on the wrong person," Hans noted, believing Serena to be unworthy of Martin's efforts.

"No, seriously, she's been sick this long and hasn't died? Has he lost his mind? If you save someone like that, won't they just cause more trouble?" Sean couldn't understand such blind devotion, to someone so blatantly undeserving.

"Who he loves or wants to save is his business," Arabella said, not wanting to dwell on it.

When the three of them approached Arabella's parents, they waited until they were alone before sharing their insights.

"Let's try to piece together the timeline Martin gave us," Arabella said calmly.

"He left our house the night before last and summoned seven or eight renowned doctors to his place overnight. By early morning, as the dawn broke, he had the doctors leave one by one, to let Erik know that Serena's injuries were too severe for treatment. According to him, not long after, he got a call from an unknown number."

Louisa and Kenneth nodded in confirmation, "Yes, that's exactly what Martin told us."

"Erik couldn't have gone far, and trusting Martin, he would have arrived at Martin's place quickly. That would have been around noon, maybe one or two in the afternoon."

"Martin claimed his men knocked Erik out cold, and indeed, there was evidence of a blow to the back of his head. To capture Erik, he also used a sedative incense. My autopsy confirmed Erik had inhaled an excessive amount of it, but,"

Her gaze met everyone's, "The scent of the incense would only render someone unconscious for a couple of hours. If I'm not mistaken about the timing, Erik would have awoken before sunset. Logically, with Martin's urgency to save someone, he could have brought Erik straight to us after he was knocked out. So why wait until after 8 p.m. to bring him to our place? What was the delay for? Did Erik wake up and they struck some sort of deal? We have no way of knowing."

Chapter 1834

The words from Arabella left the room in a state of mild shock. Could it be that Erik and Martin had been in cahoots behind the scenes?

"That sedative incense—it's a common item on the black market, with a strong aroma. Erik is somewhat a leader of an organization; he should've known what that incense could do. But he got

nabbed by Martin's bodyguard? A leader taken down by a run-of-the-mill guard? Doesn't that strike you as odd?"

"You're suggesting that Erik got captured on purpose? That from the moment he stepped into Martin's place and sniffed that sedative incense, he knew his daughter wasn't there. He realized it was a trap set by Martin, but he still played along. Could this mean he also wanted to save his daughter? That he was willing to trade his life for hers?" Kenneth speculated.

"It's a possibility we can't ignore," Arabella continued, "Another thing is, the poison that ultimately killed Erik was a slow-acting one. We guessed that Erik arrived at Martin's place around noon or early afternoon. But the timing of his ingestion of the poison was in the morning."

That meant he had ingested it before heading over to Martin's.

Everyone was taken aback at the revelation.

"So, it could really be as Dad said. He knew his daughter wasn't at Martin's and took the poison in advance to avoid suffering at our hands. He went to Martin to make a show of loyalty. Because it was a slow-acting poison, there was enough time for Martin to save his daughter and clear his own name. If Martin's off the hook, our family wouldn't pursue him, and he could then take care of his daughter,

ensure her safety."

"But Erik doesn't strike me as someone who would give up so easily," Hans chimed in, "His wife's dead, and he's letting go of that vengeance? He only has his daughter left. Doesn't he want to be there for her? To see her get married, have kids?"

"Didn't you remember the fire at the clinic? If Erik knew who the real mastermind was, could it be that the mastermind, fearing Erik would betray him if captured by us, forced Erik to take the slow-acting poison?"

In other words, Erik didn't take it willingly; he was blackmailed by the mastermind?

Louisa, perplexed by her daughter's analysis, asked, "But isn't Erik's biggest vulnerability his own flesh and blood? With his daughter under Martin's protection, what's there to fear?"

"Remember what Martha said at the unfinished building? That the mastermind has considerable power.

Could it be that not even Martin can stand against him? So, Erik sacrificed himself for his daughter's and Martin's future happiness?"

Dead men tell no tales.

With his death, the mastermind might be willing to spare Serena's life.

"Who the hell is this mastermind?" Louisa was at a loss. Over the years, who had they angered that wielded such influence? They hadn't made any mortal enemies, nor did anyone seem to have the means!

Except for the McMillian family—but no, they would never do such a thing!

Who could it be?

Who went to such lengths to hurt them?

Eighteen years and they still couldn't live in peace?

"What exactly did Erik discuss with Martin? Could it be he left instructions for after his passing? Could Erik have told Martin who the mastermind is. If we ask Martin, wouldn't we know?"

But Kenneth's glimmer of hope was quickly extinguished by his daughter's calm response, "He doesn't know."

Their surprise was apparent, even Louisa couldn't fathom it, "Bella, how can you be sure Martin doesn't know the mastermind?"

"He just called me, begging to save Serena. If he knew, he'd have used that information as a

bargaining chip by now."

"And he's still pleading for that spoiled brat." Louisa was getting angry, "But Erik isn't stupid. He must have left something for Serena, something to protect her. There's definitely something we don't know about."

As Louisa spoke, Arabella's phone began to vibrate.

Chapter 1835

Arabella's phone buzzed with messages that set the room on edge.

[Arabella, before Erik went to see the Collins family, he entrusted his personal phone to me, hoping that after I save Serena, I'd hand it over to her.]

[I obtained your contact information from his phone without Serena's consent. Although I'm not sure who planned the fire at the clinic, I bet this phone holds the secrets you're looking for.]

[It might even have details about his organization.]

[I'll trade this phone for Serena's life. Deal?]

Worried that Arabella might not bite, Martin sent another message.

[I swear, I didn't kill Erik. His death has nothing to do with me.]

Seeing Arabella glued to the screen of her phone, everyone crowded around and asked questions.

"What's going on? Who sent that?" Louisa asked with concern, "Bella? What's wrong?"

"It's messages from Martin. Just as we suspected, Erik did have an ace up his sleeve before he died—  
a phone meant for Serena."

"So, that means the phone contains the secrets we're after? I'll talk to him," Kenneth declared. "If he  
refuses to hand it over, I'll take it by force if necessary!"

It was the first time he'd considered such drastic measures.

If it weren't for that fire, his real daughter wouldn't have been swapped at birth, wouldn't have endured  
years of hardship, and they wouldn't spent all these years raising Serena, which led to the ensuing  
chaos.

He had to expose the puppeteer behind the curtain!

"If he's daring to tell us about it, it means he's not afraid of us stealing it," Arabella mused, "If he wanted  
to hide it, it'd be hard for us to find it quickly."

"But Bella, why would he tell you this? What's his angle?" Louisa pressed.

"He wants me to save Serena."

The moment Arabella spoke those words, everyone unanimously objected, "No way."

Arabella was surprised to hear the exact same words from her parents and both brothers.

None of them wanted to save Serena?

Kenneth: "After all she's done to you, how could you even think of saving her? It's generous enough that she's still breathing!"

Louisa: "Even if you save her, she won't be grateful. Who knows if she still blames you for her birth mother's death..."

Hans: "No need to save her. He shouldn't even ask."

Sean: "She's already lucky to have lived this long. Is Martin asking for trouble or what?"

The tension in the room was palpable, each family member wrestling with their conscience and the haunting shadows of their past. But amidst the turmoil, one thing was clear—their once-entwined lives with Serena had frayed, and they were all yearning for closure.

Chapter 1836

Arabella heard their words and her lips curled into a smile. "I really have no intention to play the hero."

"We don't need his pathetic clues. What if all the important information on that phone has been wiped



clean? We could be saving Serena for nothing." Sean was nobody's fool, and he certainly wasn't about to let his sister exhaust herself helping someone who didn't deserve it.

Given Martin's character, he wouldn't do anything to betray Serena, but he was acutely aware that only that cellphone could potentially save her life.

Chances were, he'd have taken a good look through Erik's phone, memorized the important stuff, deleted it, and then handed over a practically useless phone to them.

It would be nothing more than acting out a formality.

It was therefore better not to bother at all.

"But what if Erik didn't die by his own hand, but forced by someone pulling the strings? What does that tell us?"

As soon as Hans finished his question, Kenneth and Louisa said in unison, "It means the puppet master is getting antsy!"

He was rushing to get rid of Erik.

And when people rush, they tend to slip up.

Hans nodded, "That's why Bella had the servants continue to guard Erik, to keep his death under

wraps, away from prying eyes. If the puppet master wanted Erik dead, and Erik wasn't dead, they'd surely send someone to see what's up, likely to tie up loose ends."

Louisa hadn't expected her darling daughter to have already devised a plan to trap the mastermind, to instruct the servants to keep quiet, nor to have analyzed the situation so logically, instantly enlightening them to the bigger picture.

This clearly demonstrated how intelligent her beloved daughter was.

"This master has been hiding for years, definitely no simple feat. Convincing him that Erik is still alive might be tough."

No sooner had Kenneth spoken than Sean added, "What's so hard about that? Sis is a miracle, dealing with a little poison is nothing to her. She could revive a dying plant, let alone Erik. And why save him after all the bad he's done? Just to make him spill about the mastermind. So, the boss will buy it and will show up for sure."

"Sean's got it right," Arabella agreed, "All we need to do is convince them that I've revived Erik, but he's still unconscious and hasn't revealed who's behind it all. They are bound to send someone to check in,

and that's our chance to snag a tail!"

"Bella, you're a genius," Louisa couldn't help but praise, "Your little noggin thinks so far ahead, so comprehensively! Let's do it your way. We'll have people conspicuously guard Reflections Villa around the clock. The other side will think we're protecting Erik, waiting for him to wake up. It's natural and convincing."

"Our precious little girl is incredibly smart and outstanding." Kenneth also expressed his heartfelt joy.

With this plan, it was only a matter of time before they ensnared their adversary.

"Let's go with my sis's plan," Hans looked at Arabella with approval and admiration. No matter what happened, his sister never panicked.

"Just one thing." Louisa suddenly expressed concern, "I called Martin earlier and he knows Erik is dead. What if, in his desperation to save Serena, he spills to the mastermind?"

"He doesn't know who the puppet master is, what we're up to, or that Erik's death is actually useful to us. So, it's highly unlikely he'd play that card." Arabella assured her.

"But what if he does?" Louisa was still worried, ruing her impulsiveness to confront Martin on the spur of the moment, risking their well-laid plans.

"What's the big deal? You called him; I'll just give him a warning," Sean said, his penchant for boldness

no secret.

Chapter 1837

Relatively speaking, Martin was the kind who played by the rules, a real straight arrow.

Louisa had barely dialed Martin's number when Sean grabbed the phone and barked, "Martin, you

listen and listen good. Serena has crossed my sister time and again, and we've been merciful enough

not to finish her off. We left her breathing and handed her over to you, which is generosity in spades.

As for Erik's demise, if you so much as whisper a word, I'll come for Serena's life myself!"

Martin, who had been awaiting a text from Arabella, was momentarily stunned by Sean's warning, but

quickly responded with courteous assurance, "Rest assured, Mr. Collins, whether Erik is dead or alive

is beyond my knowledge. I'll keep this secret safe."

"And another thing, stay the hell away from my sister! You think she needs to save people, and that

Serena, that lowlife, is worthy?" With those final words, Sean hung up the call.

Everyone hadn't expected Sean to be still so arrogant to others.

But as he handed the phone back to Louisa and turned to Arabella with a smile, he said, "I was gentle,

wasn't I? Just gave him a verbal warning. I didn't trash his car or cut the hospital's power cut, after all.

That's being pretty decent to him."

Arabella paused a while before she nodded in agreement, "An upstanding, law-abiding citizen indeed."

"That's who I am." Sean cocked an eyebrow, looking around at everyone as if to say, 'Did you hear

that? My sister's praising me!'

When Martin heard the dial tone on the other end of the line, his heart sank. He knew that Arabella, in

all likelihood, wouldn't be coming to Serena's rescue.

He couldn't believe that even such an important phone couldn't trade for Serena's life.

What to do.

What should he do.

Kenneth and Louisa beefed up their security, even Hans reassigned some reliable men to stand guard

inside and outside the Reflections Villa. Overnight, the Collins family had become a fortress.

Arabella sent a message to the two servants in the basement, instructing them to dispose of the two

bags of bloodied gauze she left in the corner in the outside trash, and to casually strike up a

conversation while doing so.

The script for the conversation had already been sent to them.

The two servants acted immediately.

Each carrying a bag of gauze along with some household trash, they chatted as they walked.

While throwing out the trash outside, they lingered on purpose.

"I can't believe the master and his wife are really willing to get rid of everything related to Miss Serena."

They noticed the two dumpsters were overflowing, and many items had to be discarded beside the bins

—everything there had been tossed out that day; last night's trash had already been hauled away by

the garbage truck.

"Let's not talk about her at home anymore, in case we upset the master or his wife. Oh wait, she's not

part of this family anymore, no need to call her Miss. From now on, this place belongs to Ms. Bella

alone."

"Speaking of which, Ms. Bella is really something else, saving someone from such a severe poisoning.

At first, I thought he was a goner."

"Shh, keep it down, don't let anyone hear you. At first, when I saw him motionless, I thought he was

dead too. It nearly scared me half to death."

Chapter 1838

"Thank goodness for Bella's miraculous touch," one of the servants said as they walked toward the mansion's grand entrance, having just taken out the trash. "Her medical skills are second to none. It's just a shame the poor fellow's still unconscious. Who knows if he'll reveal the secrets about the fire at the clinic back in the day when he comes to."

"I can't believe someone actually tried to off the master and mistress all those years ago. Who could it be? If the guy doesn't talk when he regains consciousness, I bet the young masters will have ways to compel him to speak."

"Of course, they will. The young masters are no ordinary bunch. If it wasn't for the mastermind behind it all, Bella wouldn't have been switched at birth, and the Collins family wouldn't have ended up raising someone else's child for eighteen years. And to think, after all that, the kid turns out to be an ingrate trying to harm Bella. The Collins family will definitely get to the bottom of this."

"Right. Hans has got his people on it, and the master and mistress have brought in their most trusted aides just to guard the guy. They're waiting for him to wake up and tell the truth about that fire."

"Hey, what if he wakes up and realizes Bella saved him? Do you think he'll feel grateful enough to spill

the truth?"

"I wouldn't be surprised. I mean, he has been part of this household for over a decade, there must be some attachment. Plus, the mistress has been like a mother to him."

Their voices trailed off into whispers as they entered through the villa's gates.

After lunch, Arabella retreated to her room, leaving Sean feeling unusually listless without his sister's company.

Just then, he noticed the security monitor in the living room showing a black sedan pulling up to the driveway. He recognized the make and model; it had to be Chasel's return.

Chasel got out of the car and immediately noticed the heavy security—nearly 20 times the usual number of personnel. Alongside the regular bodyguards were some of the elite security teams belonging to his parents and Hans.

The lead bodyguard at the entrance greeted him with due respect, "Chasel."

"Any trouble at home?" Chasel asked, knowing the man was one of Hans' crew.

"There's someone Hans wants to keep safe inside. You can go in and ask about it."



The details weren't for him to disclose, cautious of eavesdroppers.

Chasel was worried, "Is it Bella? Is she in trouble?"

Only Bella could mobilize such a force from Hans and his parents.

"It's not Bella," the guard assured.

Relieved, Chasel clapped the guard's shoulder. "Thanks for your hard work."

As long as it wasn't Bella.

If it was about Bella, he would've been furious with himself for not being there sooner!

"It is our honor to serve and protect the Collins family, Chasel. Your appreciation make it all worthwhile."

Chasel nodded and headed inside, spotting what seemed to be Sean's figure emerging from the main building.

The brothers approached each other, and Chasel couldn't help but notice Sean flaunting the loungewear Arabella had gifted him—something Sean had bragged about just the day before with photos; Sean had received slippers and socks as gifts as well.

Despite the freezing temperatures outside, Sean stood there unbothered, without a jacket, just waiting

to show this to his brother.

"How does it look, huh?" Sean smirked, eager to show off his outfit to Chasel.

"Lucky for you, sis is generous enough to have given you a few sets, or you'd probably never take that outfit off." Chasel teased.

Sean's laughter was a mix of contentment and pride, "I think you're just envious you can't get one like that, Chasel."

Chapter 1839

Chasel couldn't help but laugh when he thought about coaxing compliments from his brother Sean.

Sean was hoping for Chasel to name a hundred of his virtues and to praise him, so that in return, he might consider putting in a good word for Chasel in front of their sister. But in the next second, Chasel unexpectedly spoke up.

"Envious? Why would I be? Out of all the brothers, you're always the last to get a gift from sis. And let's not forget, we've got other goodies, too. All you got was a loungewear."

"You've received other gifts?" Chasel's words struck Sean like a bolt from the blue; he couldn't believe his scheming had backfired so spectacularly. "What else did you get? Show me!"

Jealousy surged within Sean.

"Wanna know?" Chasel teased with a mischievous grin, "I'm not going to tell you."

As Chasel sauntered off toward the main house, Sean quickly followed, eager for more information.

"Come on, Chasel, what did she give you? We're brothers, man. You can't keep secrets like that from me!"

Inside the main house, the staff greeted Chasel with warm smiles. "Chasel."

"Where's Bella?" Chasel scanned the living room, but his sister was nowhere in sight.

"Miss Bella had lunch and went up to her room to rest," one of the servants informed him.

Chasel had hoped to catch up with his sister and present her with a small gift he'd picked up for her, but hearing she was resting, he settled onto the couch to settle some scores with Sean.

"How did you bully sis before? Tell me about it. Look at your face, a bit run-down—have you been getting a good beating from Hans these past few days?"

"That's nonsense. Hans has been treating me well. Not even a hint of reproach!"

"Is that so, Hans?" Chasel's sudden question caught Sean off guard.

Sean flinched. No way, when did Hans stand behind him?

"No, I mean." He whipped around, but there was no one there. Chasel had duped him!

"Out with it then, where did you get hurt?" Chasel's tone was much friendlier than Hans' usually stern demeanor, almost like a neighborly big brother.

Sean had barely sat down when Chasel playfully threw a punch his way. Sean grabbed his fist,

"Chasel, I'm just healed up. If you crack it open again, you'll have to explain that to Bella."

There it was again, hiding behind their sister's skirts.

"Hans gave you a beating that bad? To the extent that Bella had to step in? How badly were you hurt, your heart's broken?"

"Cut it out! My injury's got nothing to do with Hans. Just tell me what Bella got you."

"Spill the beans about what you did to Bella first. Also, what's with the big to-do at home?"

The brothers chatted away until Arabella, with her earphones on and tablet in hand, came downstairs.

Their eyes lit up at the sight of her.

"Bella?"

Wasn't she supposed to be napping? It looked like she was enjoying some tunes.

Even with her earphones on, Arabella heard them. She took them off and said, "Chasel, when did you get back?"

Sean's heart shattered when Arabella's first glance and first words were entirely toward Chasel.

"Just got here. You listening to music?" Chasel suddenly saw new gift ideas for his sister: a tablet and earphones!

With no one else around, Arabella confided, "I've been editing and extracting audio of Erik from when he was at home."

That included the sounds of his illness, his coughing, his voice, and more.

Chapter 1840

"Hear this—does it sound OK?" Arabella handed each of them a pair of earphones.

Chasel didn't quite get why his sister was suddenly extracting Erik's voice, but as he listened to some of the audio clips, he nodded in approval, "That's his voice, exactly. You've even filtered out the background noise. It's like he's right here with us."

Comforted by Chasel's confirmation, Arabella said, "Great, I'll go check out the room Erik stayed in before, see if he left any clues. You guys catch up."

She collected the earphones and was gone in a flash.

Sean didn't even get a chance to say a word to her before she left.

No wonder the other brothers were so eager to get home first, to spend time with their sister. It seemed the only way to get some quality time with her was to beat the clock.

The more people there were, the less time she had for each of them.

He suddenly missed the days when it was just the two of them.

"What's up with Erik?" Chasel asked in a low voice once Arabella had left.

Hans had already shown him the surveillance footage from the abandoned building, and although he knew Erik was Serena's biological father, he had no idea about what happened after that.

Sean, still feeling the sting of being overlooked by his sister, answered Chasel's question with a hint of resignation, detailing the entire situation.

Chasel finally understood that Arabella was setting a trap, waiting for the mastermind to walk right into it.

"I'm gonna head upstairs to change," Chasel said, seeing Arabella wouldn't be back for a while, intending to slip into something more comfortable, like the home attire.

His sister had designed that loungewear for him, which was no less stylish than the outfit Sean was wearing.

Once Chasel left, Sean felt even more bored, so he went to his room to fire up the computer and get some work done. But as he stepped in, his eyes fell on the sunflower field painting that Serena had given him.

It was a warm and vibrant oil painting.

Without a second thought, Sean took it down and disposed of it in the trash can, along with all the other gifts from Serena: a vintage ornament, a fancy watch, a lighter, camping gear, rock climbing equipment, and more.

A servant, alerted by the noise, thought something was wrong and hurried over to check.

Sean's door was open, and the servant saw all the items related to Serena being discarded without a second thought.

Sean used to cherish these gifts, once throwing a fit when a servant accidentally broke a ceramic cup Serena had made for him.

Who would have thought these treasures would one day be junk.

"Take out the trash." Sean ordered.

"Yes, sir," the servant quickly complied, taking the discarded memories away.

With all traces of Serena gone, Sean's room finally felt right again.

Meanwhile.

After changing into his loungewear, Chasel's gaze inadvertently caught the razor, men's cologne, and skincare products on his dresser, all gifts from Serena last year.

He had been so happy to receive them that he hardly ever used them, wanting to keep them pristine.

Besides these, there was a photo in his bookcase of him and Serena, taken just after she won first place at a piano competition last year. They were at the venue, her holding the trophy and his hands.

Serena looked absolutely radiant with joy in that photo, her eyes filled with a happy glow.

Chasel then pulled out a thick photo album from the bookcase, filled with family pictures from over the years, many of them featuring Serena.

There were pictures of the two of them as kids, chasing each other around, riding bikes, having fun at theme parks.