

When His Eyes Opened by Simple Silence Chapter 781

Chapter 781 Zoe's story was nothing but an enormous lie, yet he was even more laughable than her. At least Zoe knew that it was a lie from the start, but he had believed her story up until now.

"Avery Tate, why would you do this to me?" Elliot mumbled as he quietly sobbed, "why?"

All he received in response was the sound of the wind blowing.

On the way home, Layla muttered in confusion, "why isn't Dad happy when he finds out that Mom was the one who performed surgeries on Shea?"

"Layla, would you be mad if your brother lies to you?" Mike tried to explain with a metaphor. "Your dad wouldn't have been upset if he had known about it all along."

"Why didn't Mom tell him, then?"

"Because your mom didn't want anything to do with him at first. She was afraid that if she gets involved with him, he would come and take you and your brother away from her. By the time their relationship improved, it was too long in the past for her to mention."

Layla still seemed slightly confused by Mike's explanation.

"The adults' world is so complicated!"

“Yeah! Which is why people like Shea are actually rather lucky.” Mike glanced at Layla and said, “your eyes are all swollen now. I thought that you had a rehearsal tonight?”

“It’s a rehearsal, not the official live performance.” Layla rubbed her eyes and it hurt a little.” After the show, I want to go find Mom.”

“Sure.”

In the evening, Avery made a video call to them.

It was seven in the morning in Bridgedale and that was usually the time they video called one another.

“Shea has been buried and Layla has gone off to attend the rehearsal for the night ball.” Mike and Hayden stood before the camera in the video call with Avery. “Layla told Elliot that you were the one who performed surgeries on Shea and he was really emotional as though he had been struck.”

Avery remained silent.

“Did he contact you?” Mike asked.

“No.” Avery drew a quiet deep breath and changed the subject.

“Layla’s classmate’s mother contacted me saying that her child will be having a birthday celebration soon, CNYJGT?g would like to invite Layla as a guest. That child seems to be quite close with Layla so if you have time

tomorrow, take Layla over. If you are busy, tell the bodyguard to send her.”

“Oh, I’m busy tomorrow. I will tell the bodyguard to send her there, then.”

“Sure.” Avery turned her attention to Hayden. “Hayden, do you have class tomorrow ?”

Hayden nodded.

“What do you learn in the special classes?” Avery hadn’t a clue about what Hayden was studying, as it was a completely different field as her profession.

Hayden briefly went through the content of his curriculum and Avery complimented him as she often did, “you are so brilliant, darling. I am so proud of you.”

It was a simple complement, but Hayden felt especially proud.

After the video call, Mike looked at the time and said, “why don’t we go shop? Your mom said that Layla will be celebrating her classmate’s birthday tomorrow, so let’s go get a gift.”

Hayden didn’t like going out at night and rejected his suggestion.

“Go find Uncle Chad for that!”

“Alright! Layla will get home a little late tonight, so you can go ahead and sleep first if you get tired. Don’t wait up,” Mike reminded. “I will be out late as well.”

“Okay.”

The next day, Layla arrived at her classmate's home with a present accompanied by the bodyguard. As the living room was packed with children, the owner of the house invited the bodyguard to a poker game in the multi-function room.

After playing with the others for a while, Layla slowly developed the urge to relieve herself, so she headed to the bathroom.

A woman followed her inside.

Layla, who didn't want to be watched as she used the bathroom, said, "Auntie, I don't need help."

The woman locked the door from the inside and said, "go ahead and use the bathroom first, Layla. I came in because I needed to ask you something."

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Layla was not a clueless child. She glanced at the woman who followed her in with the corner of her eyes. She did not know this person at all, so why would she claim that there was something she needed from Layla?

Layla relieved herself and swiftly pulled her pants back up.

"Don't be nervous, Layla. I'm not a bad person," the woman immediately started talking once Layla was dressed. "I am sent by Elliot."

Layla instantly lowered her defenses at the mention of Elliot. Though she did not officially admit

that Elliot was her father, he had been nice to her; at the very least, she believed that Elliot wouldn't hurt her.

She sighed a breath of relief and said, "you scared me, Auntie! Why did Elliot sent you here to look for me? Why didn't he just contact me directly? I saw him just yesterday!"

Guilt flashed by the woman's eyes. "It's more of an important matter and it's peculiar, so he was worried that he might scare you if he talked to you directly; that's why he told me to come instead."

Layla was only beginning to let her guards down, but immediately became nervous again at the woman's words.

"What kind of important and peculiar business do you have to say to a kid like me?" Layla enjoyed pretending to be an adult, but she had never forgotten the fact that she was a child." My mom is in Bridgedale, but you can call her! You can talk to my brother as well!"

In Layla's mind, though her brother was the same age as her, Hayden was already a mature individual.

The woman shook her head. "Your mother doesn't know about this. It's about a crimson colored box."

The
look on Layla's face instantly froze in response to the words.

'A crimson-colored box?'

Layla had received countless gifts on every special occasion and they were all wrapped in boxes of different colors, so Layla couldn't quite understand what the woman meant by 'a crimson colored box'.

"There's no rush,
Layla. The crimson box I'm talking about belongs to Elliot. Did you and your brother take a crimson-colored box from his house before?" Woman explained in details AKOJGP-h Layla immediately remembered.

It was the crimson-colored box that she had taken from Elliot's study room when she went to his house.

In truth, her mother had been rather strict on educating them and stealing from someone's home was absolutely forbidden; however, something ticked off in her head that day when she thought of what a dirtbag Elliot was for not raising her and her brother, and making her mother angry. Hence, she took something of his on purpose as a punishment towards her.

She had been younger then and there wasn't much she could do to Elliot even if she wanted to, but she had never imagined that a box that she had randomly taken contained something that important.

"Do you remember it now, Layla? The box contains something really important to Elliot." The woman noticed Layla looking awa

y and instantly knew that there was something to it. If Layla hadn't seen or taken the box, she would have denied it right away.

A child her age could never hide what was truly on her mind.

Layla looked up and scanned the woman up and down.

Her brother had told her that the box contained something important to Elliot and that she was to keep it a secret. None of them had mentioned it to their mother or Mike that the box was buried under a tree in their yard.

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But how did Elliot realize that she was the one who took the box?

Unsettled, Layla had no clue as to what to do when there was no one else she could rely on.

"I... I don't know... Auntie, I want to go home." Layla lowered her gaze and tried to exit the bathroom.

The woman stood before the door and stopped her from getting out.

"Layla, I know that you might be a little scared right now. So am I," she lowered her voice, "but if you don't tell me where the box is, not only will Elliot see me, he will kill the body guard who sent you here as well. You should have heard what kind of a man he is, right?"

Layla shook her head frantically without a moment of hesitation.

“Is he going to kill me, too, if I don’t say anything? No way! He won’t do that!”

“He is definitely not going to kill you. You are his daughter, after all. But do you want to see the bodyguard who sent you here die?” The woman’s voice was soft, yet filled with threats.

Layla’s eyes reddened as she sobbed, “no... I don’t want my bodyguard to die...”

“Layla, that box belongs to Elliot. All you need to do is to return it and nothing bad will happen,” the woman coaxed, “it was Elliot’s to begin with, so let’s return it to its owner, okay?”

Layla’s defenses crumbled. “I... I need to talk to my brother first...”

“Why would you need to talk to him? What would happen if he doesn’t approve? If that happens, both me and your bodyguard would die at the hands of Elliot.” Tears scrolled down the woman’s face as she spoke, “return the box in silence and tell your brother when he finds out. Surely he wouldn’t blame you; he might not even notice it at all.”

Layla raised her hand to wipe away her tears as she struggled. She had never encountered a situation like this before and how could a six-year-old like her possibly made up her mind?

“Layla, is that box at your house? Let me send you back, okay?”
The woman continued, “tell your bodyguard to drive the two of us back to get the box.”

Layla reluctantly nodded. “My brother would be mad if he found out.”

“Then don’t tell him. The box belongs to Elliot, not your brother. It was wrong of you to take something that isn’t yours to begin with.”

The woman’s words finally convinced Layla to let her guard down.

She was the one who took the box FJOMGY:c now, she had to be the one to return it; it could be

a good thing to pretend that nothing had ever happened.

They drove back to Starry River Villa. The woman and the bodyguard waited in the yard while Layla went into the mansion on her own.

It was the first time she had ever felt so alone. Mike and Hayden were not at home and there were only nannies left to clean the house. Had any of them been at home, she would have rushed towards them to tell them what had happened.

Layla sighed gloomily and took out a shovel, before walking back to the woman and point at one of the trees. “It’s under the ground.”

The woman accepted the shovel in pleasant surprise.

Hayden was the one who buried the box. Since he was still a child and could hardly measure up to the strength of an adult, he couldn't bury it too deep; it took the woman a short while of digging before she found the crimson box.

The woman gave Layla an overjoyed smile after getting the box.

"Layla, you are such a good girl! Well then, I don't overstay my welcome," she said happily, before leaving the mansion with the box.

The bodyguard watched the woman left in confusion. "Layla, what did she just dug up? Why are you giving it to her?"

"That's Elliot's, not mine." Layla pouted.

"Oh." The bodyguard responded, but soon realized that something was wrong. "But why are you giving Elliot's thing to that woman?!"

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Chapter 784 "That lady was sent by Elliot," Layla explained to the bodyguard in all seriousness, "Elliot is a bad person! She said that if I don't give the box up, Elliot will kill you. You protect me every single day, how can I let him kill you?"

The bodyguard felt flattered and surprised at the same time. "Why don't I feel like that's the kind of man Elliot Foster is? If one beats a dog, one has to answer to its master. I am hired by your mother. How is he supposed to explain himself to your mother if he kills me?"

Layla blinked blankly. “So, you are saying that he doesn’t dare to offend Mom?”

“Yeah! When has he ever bullied anyone in this house? Whether it’s you and your brother, or your Uncle Mike, he has always been quite polite when he sees you all,” the bodyguard rationalized, “why would he kill me when I didn’t do anything to him?”

“But I stole from him,” Layla mumbled while tugging at the corner of her clothes. “I stole that box from his house and it contains something really important. Now that I’ve returned it to him, he probably won’t be mad anymore.”

The bodyguard felt like there was more to the story, but since Layla had gone ahead and returned the box, there was nothing much left to be concerned with.

Just then, on the highway outside Starry River Villa, the woman who obtained the box called her employer smugly to report the good news.

She had not expected to accomplish her mission so easily. As she had expected, Layla was a simple-minded little girl who would panic at the simplest threat.

It was also sheer luck that she had succeeded, because Layla’s house happened to be empty and everything went smoothly when Layla had no one else to talk to.

Once the call was answered, the person on the other side of the line asked, "how did it go? Did you get it?"

"I did! It went smoothly!" The woman played with the crimson-colored box while sitting on the passenger's seat. "I heard that this box contains Elliot Foster's secret... It's no wonder that you are willing to pay such a high price for it!"

"It means death to ordinary people if they get their hands on the box. Don't even think about keeping it to yourself, or you will die," the employer warned sarcastically, "don't take Elliot Foster lightly! If you don't get me the box, I will send your personal information to him right away! If I can't have it, you are not getting out of the woods either!"

The woman paled in fear. "That's not what I mean to say... I've never thought of keeping the box to myself. Money is more promising and I don't want to take that big of a risk. Just

transfer the money to my account. I'm already on my way."

As soon as the woman finished her sentence, a deafening "baam!" followed as a white car lost control and ran into them.

The woman screamed as the car was sent flying and the heart-wrenching shout was heard by the employer through the phone...

A smug expression had appeared on Wanda's face as she was assured that she had the box, but when she heard the

screaming, she stood up from her chair hastily and shouted at the phone,” hello?! What happened?! What’s going on??”

However, there was nothing but static on the other end of the line. She seemed to hear the sound of glass breaking, cars honking frantically and the pained moans of a woman...

All the sounds came together to form a picture of a car crush.

Wanda was stunned.

The person she had sent had obtained the box with such ease that she thought that she would have the crimson-colored box within half an hour, but instead, a car accident took place at such a crucial time.

If there was a car accident, the police would arrive at the scene immediately and all personal effects inside the car would be taken away.

If the police collected the box and realized that the content inside belonged to Elliot, they would contact him right away to return it to him.

Wanda felt like she was going crazy.

She could not allow that to happen. She must hurry over and get the box.

She grabbed onto her phone tightly and her brain went into overdrive. The car crush had likely taken place near Starry River Villa because the woman she hired had contacted Wanda immediately after obtaining the box.

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After confirming that, Wanda rushed out of the company and drove towards Starry River Villa.

She arrived at Starry River Villa at the fastest speed she could manage and spotted the scene of the car crash as soon as she drove onto the highway outside the villa.

She got out of the car and stepped towards the crowd that surrounded the scene.

A black car and a white car had crashed into one another to the extent that both were deformed; the scene was chaotic and covered with a terrifying amount of blood. Apart from the blood, the one thing that was most eye-catching had to be the person laying on the ground covered by a large piece of white fabric.

It was not a person, but a body.

Wanda stood amongst the crowd and studied the clothes of the deceased under the white rug... From the clothes alone, she had come to a conclusion that it was the person she had hired.

Her blood instantly ran cold.

‘So what if she is dead? Where is the box?! Where is the box?’ She thought.

She desperately wanted to rush towards the car to search for the box, but the police officers were taking

photos of the crash site and she didn't dare to act rashly. If Elliot found out that she was at the accident scene, he would be able to find an excuse to punish her even if she wasn't there to look for the box.

Her eyes began to turn red as she stared at every single item that the police recovered from the car; when she saw the blood-stained box being taken out, she felt that she was running out of air and was about to suffocate.

'That's the box! That has to be the box! That's the box that contains what I need!' She thought and pushed her way forward subconsciously.

One of the police officers opened the box to check what was inside.

Wanda held her breath and widened her eyes to the point that her eyes looked as though they were about to pop out of her sockets.

She watched as the officer opened the box to have a look inside, before closing it back up and tossing it aside casually like it was garbage.

Wanda stared at the crimson-colored box and the emotions that were boiling within her instantly cooled down.

'Can...can it be that there is nothing inside that box?!' She thought, 'why else would the police

officer just toss it on the ground like that?'

If there was something in the box, the officer would have taken it out to inspect it; but instead, he opened the box without taking anything out, before closing it back up. It could only mean that the box was empty.

Wanda couldn't help but step back.

If there was nothing inside the box, there was no need for her to waste any more time here.

An hour later, Elliot caught the news that the crimson box that went missing from his study room had resurfaced.

The bodyguard brought the box to him and he scowled at the sight of the blood on the box. If it wasn't for the fact that the box contained his personal belongings, he would have never lay a finger on it.

He accepted the box and opened it...

When he saw that there was nothing inside, he immediately clenched his fingers and crushed the box in his hand.

"Mr. Foster, they found this box at the scene of a car accident. The couple in the car are both dead," the bodyguard said, "the police said that the box had been empty from the moment they took it out from the car."

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Chapter 786 Who took the content inside the box?

The truth seemed so close, yet so far. The one thing he could be certain of was that the person who took it was around him.

The car crash took place on the highway outside Starry River Villa, so there was a high chance that the box, or the content inside the box leaked from Starry River Villa, it would be hard to explain why the car crash took place there otherwise.

In the hospital.

Though Chelsea managed to survive, she was suffering excruciating pain because the left side of her face had been burned. The doctor had told her that there would be a scar on her left cheek and it was unsalvageable.

She had been tending to her looks with extra care since she was young, and couldn't accept the fact that her face was ruined.

It was more devastating than death, but even death didn't come easy.

"You should realize the reality now, Chelsea!" Mrs. Tierney sat by the bed and said in a cold voice, "I told you to stay away from Elliot Foster long ago and you wouldn't listen. With how you've turned out right now, I truly worry for your life from now on."

Mrs. Tierney was the biological mother of Chelsea and a step-mother to Charlie, but she favored Charlie because the legacy of the Tierney Family rested in Charlie's hands.

She treated Charlie as though he was his biological son in hope that he would in turn protect her in the future.

"Just forget that you have a daughter like me from now on!" Chelsea said in desperation, "Charlie treats you well any way. All you need is him."

“You are still my daughter. Of course, I wouldn’t want you to lead a miserable life.” Mrs. Tierney lowered her gaze. “Your brother broke one of his legs and will be a cripple for the rest of his life.”

“So what, if he’s a cripple? It doesn’t affect his right to inherit the family properties; my face is ruined. There won’t be any rich man out there willing to take me. There’s no way I can find a proper job like the one I had before either,” Chelsea sobbed, “I’m useless. Is this my karma?”

“Chelsea, your self-pitying is very unbecoming.” Mrs. Tierney scowled. “Your brother will definitely take care of you. No matter how bad it gets, you will have someone to rely on. Don’t

act as though the others owe you something.”

“Mom, I really hate you. Do you really not know why I follow Elliot around? It’s because what he gave me was way more than what you and Dad have given me. When I was by his side, you two would never look down on me. Elliot can ensure that I am respected.”

“What gives you the right to be mad at me and your father? Without the Tierney Family, do you really think that you can approach Elliot to begin with?” Mrs. Tierney said sarcastically, “you have such a stubborn and strange character. I wonder who you got that from. I have nothing else to say to you.”

Mrs. Tierney said in contempt, before getting up to leave the room.

If the day she broke all ties with Elliot was the gloomiest day in Chelsea’s life, then today was truly the end to her world.

Fame and money might get her respect from others, but what truly made one feel safe was a healthy body.

How was she supposed to live out the rest of her life ?

Mrs. Tierney stepped out of Chelsea's room and came to Charlie's.

She was surprised when she saw someone visiting and it happened to be Elliot.

The fruit basket and flowers he brought oozed a strong fragrance.

Mrs. Tierney walked towards him with despair in her eyes. "Mr. Foster, my son's disabled and my daughter's face is ruined, are you still not satisfied? How is this different from killing them?"

On the bed, Charlie widened his eyes while tears welled up in them. His lips trembled as though he was trying to say something to Elliot, but in the end, he could only manage to make weird gurgling noises.

"They used to be my friends, and it pains me to see them turn out like this," Elliot said calmly, "Charlie seems a bit agitated, so I will leave him alone now."

With that, he strode out of the room.

The reason that he came to visit Charlie was to check his current condition. The content inside of the box was taken and there were only two suspects in his mind: Wanda, or Charlie.

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Chapter 787 From what he had seen, Charlie couldn't speak, so he wouldn't be able to make any command or steal the content of the box.

“Mr. Foster, Chelsea is right next door, would you like to go see her?” The bodyguard asked Elliot, “I heard that her face is ruined. For someone who empathizes beauty so much, a scar on her face would be a living hell for her.”

The bodyguard only mentioned it because he knew that Elliot hated Chelsea.

Elliot had no intention of visiting Chelsea at first, but stopped at the bodyguard’s suggestion, before stepping towards Chelsea’s room and opening the door.

Chelsea glanced over and met his eyes; instantly, her eyes were filled with fear.

She covered her bandages—wrapped face and subconsciously avoided eye contact.

“I thought you ran to another country?” Elliot swallowed hard and mocked sarcastically, “how dare you come back?”

Tears welled up in her eyes as she uttered in despair, “I’m not running anymore, Elliot! Just kill me!”

She moved the blanket away and stepped out of bed, before stumbling her way towards him and kneeled. She grabbed onto the corner of his trousers and said, “I’m ruined, Elliot! My whole life is ruined! Just end it already! I don’t have the courage to end my own life...so just kill me...”

He lowered his glance at her expression and felt somewhat sympathetic at how desperately she longed to die.

“The more you wish you are dead, the more unlikely I am to kill you.” He stared down at her with his cold eyes and shoved her aside. “Live the rest of your life crawling and struggling like an ant.”

By the time he exited the hospital, the night had fallen over the city, covering it with a mysterious and chilling darkness. The branches whined in the freezing breeze and the snow on them fell onto the ground as they moved. The driver drove out of the hospital once Elliot was inside the car and asked, “where to, Mr. Foster?”

Elliot remained quiet for a few moments, as he couldn't decide whether to head home or go to Avery's mansion.

The car crash had taken place near Starry River Villa. He wanted to know if they were involved in the incident.

When he sent his men to look for Wanda earlier that afternoon, he learned that she had already fled overseas; if Wanda was the one who took what was in the box, she wouldn't have to escape and could directly blackmail him with the content instead. Hence, there was a great chance that Wanda did not possess it.

“Starry River Villa,” he muttered.

“Understood, Mr. Foster.” The driver turned the car around and drove towards Starry River Villa.

In Starry River Villa, Layla was on a video call with Avery using Mike's phone.

They would usually converse in a group in most video calls, but today, Layla had sent Mike elsewhere as she wanted to speak to her mother alone.

Hayden, on the other hand, had yet to return home because he hadn't finished his homework.

Just then, Layla was whispering sweetly to Avery in the living room.

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"Mom, I am never going to any of my classmates' birthday parties again." Layla's eyes turned red. "I am not going to whoever's birthday it is."

Avery sensed that Layla was acting oddly. "What's wrong, Darling? Did someone bully you at your classmate's house today?"

Layla pouted and was about to shake her head when she caught sight of a towering figure from the corner of her eyes.

It was Elliot! Startled, Layla instantly dropped the phone to the ground.

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Chapter 788 'Why is he here all of a sudden? I've already returned the box to him!' Layla thought. Scared that he was her

e looking for trouble, she immediately ran out of the living room and shouted, "Uncle Mike!"

Layla's scream had frightened Avery.

When Layla dropped the phone to the ground, the camera was faced at the ceiling of the living room so Avery could only attempt to guess what had happened from the noises as she couldn't see anything at all.

One thing that she could be certain of was that Layla was in a dangerous situation.

"Layla!" Avery grabbed onto her phone tightly and stepped out of her room.

Her heart sank; though she was in Bridgedale at the moment, if something was about to happen to her daughter, Avery would not hesitate to travel back to Aryadelle right away.

Elliot scowled when he saw the way Layla ran off in fear. He had met with Layla plenty of times and though she had never been polite with him before, she had never acted so frightened either.

He raised his hand to touch his own face and confirmed that there was nothing on his face; what was Layla so scared of?

He stepped into the living room and spotted the phone on the ground, so he immediately picked it up

Startled by Layla's scream, Avery was still calling out to Layla.

Elliot looked at the screen and explained, "I startled her. She is with Mike right now."

When Avery heard his voice and saw his familiar face, the anxiety and tension in her heart faded, and was soon replaced by confusion.

"Why is she that scared of you?" Avery questioned sharply with a frown.

Elliot felt helpless, because he was wondering the same thing as well:

"Why are you in my house this late at night?" Avery continued to ask when he did not respond.

"It's not that late." Elliot studied the aggressive look on her face and felt a lump in his throat when he was reminded of the reason why she had taken Robert with her and left. "I happened to drive past this place and decided to drop by."

"Neither your company nor your house is in the same direction as my house." Avery exposed

him of his lie. BJrKFYlh asked, "what exactly have you done to Layla?"

Not far away, Mike walked into the living room with Layla in his arms.

Mike had asked Layla the same question as well, but Layla had only shook her head and refused to say anything else.

“Maybe it’s because I didn’t knock when I came in,” he explained, “I parked the car outside the yard so she didn’t expect someone to walk in out of the blue.”

“You are no stranger to her. Even if you come in unannounced, she wouldn’t be this frightened,” Avery denied his explanation and continued, “pass the phone to Layla. I am asking her.”

Layla lowered her eyes and avoided looking directly at Elliot’s face.

Mike took the phone from Elliot and faced the camera at Layla’s face. “Layla, talk to your mom. What did Elliot do to you? Don’t be scared. Your mom might not be here, but Uncle Mike will protect you.”

Layla didn’t have the courage to say a word. If her mother found out that she had stolen something from Elliot, Avery would surely be furious.

“Layla, did I startle you because I didn’t knock just now?” Elliot couldn’t help but ask when he noticed that Layla was pouting wordlessly.

“Don’t speak, or I will suspect that you are pressuring her!” Mike glared at him. “I’ve never seen her this scared before.” Elliot pursed his lips and waited for Layla’s response.

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Chapter 789 Layla took the phone and looked at her mother from the screen, before muttering, “Mom, he didn’t knock when he came in...so I thought bad people had come inside...”

She did not have the courage to confess to Avery.

If only her brother was around.

Layla decided that he would tell her brother about what happened when he got home so that he could help come up with a solution.

Avery

relaxed at Layla’s explanation and said gently, “Layla, I feel like you are in a bad mood today. Did something happen at your classmate’s place? Don’t be scared, you can tell me anything.”

Elliot stood by the side and felt odd when he heard what Avery said.

“Layla went to her classmate’s house today?” He thought, “it must have something to do with why she is acting odd.”

“I’m fine, Mom,” Layla said while sneaking a glance at Elliot’s direction.

“If something happened, you have to tell me. You can call me anytime you want,” Avery reminded.

“I know, Mom,” Layla said and blew a kiss at the screen.

After the video call ended, Layla handed Mike his phone back.

Mike put the phone away and stared at Elliot warily. "Who are you looking for? What do you want?"

"I want to speak with Layla alone," Elliot said, "I want to apologize to her for scaring her just now."

"Apologize right here! There is no need to talk to her alone." Mike wasn't sure what Elliot was thinking, so there was no way that he would allow Elliot to be alone with Layla.

"Layla, please believe me when I say that I would never hurt you." Elliot turned his attention to Layla and said, "if I ever hurt you, let the gods punish me by never letting me see your mother again."

Layla had buried herself into Mike's arms but instantly felt less frightened at Elliot's words.

She struggled to get down and lifted her chin. "I happen to have something to tell you as well."

Elliot nodded and followed her to the guest room on the first floor. Once they were inside,

Elliot gently closed the door behind them.

"Why are you so scared of me, Layla?" Elliot couldn't wait to ask, "what happened when you were at your classmate's house today? Your mom isn't around right now, so you can tell me."

Layla frowned at his words.

He was the one who sent someone to her classmate's house, asking for the box. Did he forget about it?

"Layla, I am your father. Even if you won't admit it, it doesn't change the nature of our relationship. I will bear the responsibility of a father. I will protect you with everything I have." Elliot opened up to her when he noticed her hesitation.

"Weren't you the one who sent a woman there to look for me and threaten to kill my bodyguard...?" Layla clenched her fists angrily and asked.

Elliot's eyes glared coldly at the realization that someone had threatened Layla using his name!

"How abhorrent! It's no wonder that Layla seems so scared when she sees me," he thought.

"It wasn't me, Layla! Why would I kill your bodyguard? I pay all bodyguards that work here extra every month. I couldn't possibly send someone to threaten you as well." He hastily squatted down and looked her directly in the eyes. "What did that lady tell you to do?"

Layla's eyes reddened in fear at Elliot's explanation. If Elliot was not the one who sent that woman, it meant that she had been fooled and handed Elliot's belongings to a bad person.

Thinking that Elliot would be furious if he learnt the truth, Layla started crying. "Boohoo... I am such an idiot..."

Elliot's heart ached at her tears and lifted her up, before gently wiping her tears away. "Don't cry, Layla. As long as you are safe, nothing else matters."

"But I gave your stuff to someone else..." Layla looked at him through the tears and pouted as she confessed, "it's the... the crimson-colored box..."

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Layla became even more upset after that.

Elliot was not at all surprised.

Everything would make sense if Layla was the one who took the box; it explained why they couldn't seem to find out who stole the box because no one would suspect a four-year-old child.

Layla was very dependent at the time, and who would suspect a child who couldn't take care of herself?

Apart from that, it also explained why the content inside the box was never publicized or used to blackmail Elliot after it was taken.

"Layla, what kind of clothes did that woman wear?"

Elliot sat her down on a chair, before wiping her tears away with tissue. When her sobbing had ceased, he continued, "was she a gray coat?"

"How do you know?" Layla looked at him, red-eyed. "Did you get the box back?"

Elliot remained thoughtful for a while, before he decided to tell her the truth. “No, that lady who lied to you had died in a car crash. Whatever’s in the box had been taken. Don’t be sad though, what’s lost is lost.”

“But my brother said that the box contains something really important...” Layla snuffled and lowered her lashes. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have taken your stuff.”

Elliot felt exceptionally calm as he listened to his daughter’s apology. Had it been anyone else who took what belonged to him, leading to such an unfortunate outcome, Elliot would have made them pay; but because it was his daughter who did it, he did not intend on blaming her

even if the sky was the fall upon them.

Curious to what she was thinking at the time, he asked, “why did you take the box?”

“I hated you, so I took something of yours. I want you to get nervous when you can’t find it.” Layla pouted regretfully. “If only I knew that it’s that important, I would have never taken it!”

“Don’t cry, Layla. Let’s not tell your mom about this.” Elliot didn’t want Avery to worry, and judging from how scared Layla appeared to be, she must have kept it from Avery.

He had asked Avery about the box when it went missing at the beginning; Avery would have told him if she knew anything about this.

Layla looked at him. "What about my brother?"

"You can choose not to tell your brother if you don't want to."

Elliot looked at her gently and said, "just pretend that nothing happened today. It's going to be a new year soon; you and your brother should go have fun with your mother."

"What about you?" Layla finally let her guard down and felt an indescribable warmth spreading from her chest to throughout her body.

Her father didn't seem too bad after all.

"I will be spending new years in my house." Elliot studied Layla's face, which resembled Avery, and asked endearingly, "what new year gift do you want? I will buy it for you before you leave."

Layla blinked thoughtfully as she contemplated it.

There were plenty of things that she wanted, but most could be obtained from her mother, Mike or Eric.

"I like hair clips. I already have a lot of pretty hair clips but I will still be very happy if I get new ones." Layla told him the gift that she wanted most and asked, "what new year gift do you want? I can buy you a gift as well. To tell you a secret, I have a lot of money!"

"I want you to call me Dad," Elliot confessed his wish, "even if or once."

Layla was stunned. She had never called him ‘Dad’ before and to suddenly start felt somewhat embarrassing. However, she had lost something that belonged to him, and not only did he not blame her, but he also offered to buy her a new year gift. It seemed as though calling him ‘Dad’ was not too much a thing for him to ask. “Dad,” she looked up at Elliot’s sophisticated features and muttered shyly.