

Million-Dollar 131

Chapter 131

Arabella made a quick assessment of her situation.

She had slipped out when the guards at the entrance were off guard, planning to find a nearby place to borrow a phone to call the police.

By turning in Elijah, she would sever all ties with him in the public eye, and once he was locked up, she could finally be free.

She had fled in such a hurry that she hadn't even put on her shoes. She ran barefoot on the concrete pavement, eyeing a man in a black suit standing at the bus stop ahead.

"Sir, could I borrow your cellphone? I need to call the police!" She ran towards him, ignoring her raw and bleeding feet.

"Oh?" The man turned his face. His handsome looks made it hard to distinguish whether he was masculine or feminine, yet he was utterly aloof. "You need to call the police?"

"Yes, I've found a fugitive. I need to report him!" Arabella nodded frantically.

With a cold smirk, the man suddenly covered Arabella's mouth with his gloved hand, dragging her back to the basement.

Oh no!

A chill ran down Arabella's spine as she realized this man was in cahoots with Elijah.

"Useless!" The man threw Arabella at Elijah. "You can't even keep an eye on your own girl! She nearly ran off to the cops!"

"Mister!" Elijah had been lounging on the bed, looking like a disheveled mess. He scrambled to his knees at the sight of the man.

But after seeing Arabella, he couldn't help but slap her harshly. "You traitor! How dare you betray me?!"

Arabella curled up, shivering. She was too frightened to make a sound.

"Have you forgotten who bailed you out of jail?!" Elijah lunged at Arabella.

"Worthless!" The man kicked Elijah onto the ground. "You're supposed to be here on a mission, but instead, you're messing around with perfume making, and you've ruined your reputation!"

"It was her. She encouraged me to challenge Vivienne!" Elijah quickly pointed at Arabella, blaming everything on her.

"You lost your mind over a woman? And you still have the balls to speak?" The man's voice grew

colder.

"Sir, I beg you to let me make amends!" Elijah pleaded while kowtowing. "I promise I'll get my hands on

Vivienne's perfume formulas!"

"No need." The man was ruthless. "From now on, I'll take over. You'll do as I say."

"Yes, yes." Elijah crawled like a dog on the ground, not daring to resist.

The man's gaze suddenly turned to Arabella, who was huddled to one side. Arabella had overheard

their conversation and was wondering what they wanted Vivienne's perfume formulas for when the

man's icy voice fell on her ears. "Didn't you want to call the police?"

"No! No! I was wrong! I won't do it again! I won't call the police!" Arabella couldn't help but tremble.

"Don't be afraid; here's the phone. Go ahead and call the police." The man took out his phone and

handed it to Arabella.

Arabella blankly took the phone.

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Bay Estates.

Vivienne had been busy settling in Riley and Raymond this week.

Given the publicity surrounding Riley being Vivienne's apprentice and Vivienne's low-profile approach

to her perfume business, many well-known brands had turned their attention to Riley.

However, since Raymond and Riley had little experience in this field, Vivienne, fearing they would be

taken advantage of, had Matthew arrange for a legal aid to review their contracts.

When Vivienne returned to Percival's apartment after settling everything, she was met with his resentful

gaze.

"Vivienne, am I really that old?"

Vivienne looked at him and, while resting her chin on her hand, seriously said, "You don't look old."

Percival was just about to breathe a sigh of relief when he heard Vivienne say, "But you are old, Mr.

Wolf."

Percival was speechless.

He regretted it.

He shouldn't have let her change his title.

He preferred Mr. Ellington.

Just as he was about to ask Vivienne to change his title back, Vivienne's phone rang.

It was Cordelia.

"Vivienne, your father's in trouble!" She said anxiously on the phone. "It's Arabella. She's accusing him of rape!"

"What happened?" Vivienne's heart sank; her face was darker than the sky on a cloudy day.

Percival, who had been sulking on the couch, suddenly became serious. He opened the news on his phone and showed it to Vivienne. "Vivienne, look."

"Don't worry. I'll call you back after I find out what's going on." Vivienne reassured Cordelia and looked at Percival's phone.

The voice from the news video came out. "Today at two in the afternoon, the East District police received a report. Master Q's father, Dorian Hawthorn, was accused of raping his adopted daughter, Arabella, and has been arrested by the police."

"It is reported that Dorian has a paedophile inclination, and Arabella alleges that after adopting her, he would often molest her. To protect her from being violated by her adoptive father, Dorian's mother, Beatrice Hawthorn, would often keep Arabella by her side. Now, Beatrice Hawthorn has also come

forward to testify."

After watching the video, Vivienne's face turned icy cold.

She then found another news piece about Elijah being arrested in the East District due to Arabella's tip-off.

The news portrayed Arabella as a daring woman who was brave enough to sever ties with her master, Elijah.

According to Arabella herself, she and Beatrice's family were taken hostage by Elijah. He fancied her and used the threat of harm to Beatrice and her family to manipulate her. She had no choice but to comply.

However, she found an opportunity to escape and sought refuge with her foster father, Dorian. She hoped that Dorian would call the police, but instead, he attempted to take advantage of her. She fought back, knocked Dorian unconscious, and managed to escape unharmed.

"Hmm." Vivienne put away her phone and chuckled softly. But her laugh sent a chill down one's spine.

An icy aura seemed to radiate from her.

Was everyone under the impression that she was easygoing?

Percival gently patted her head and whispered, "Don't worry, I'll handle this."

Vivienne looked up with a frosty expression on her face. "No need. I'll deal with it myself!"

She paused for a moment before returning Cordelia's call. "Cordelia, I've seen the news."

"Vivienne, your father is absolutely not like that!" Cordelia's sobbing voice came through the phone.

"When we adopted Arabella, your father truly loved her like his own. But she chose to chase after wealth and left us."

"I know." Vivienne softened her voice to reassure her. "Cordelia, don't worry. As long as he is innocent, I can prove it."

"How could she do this after all your father did for her?" Cordelia couldn't comprehend. Even if she resented them for cutting ties and wanted to take revenge, there was no need to tarnish her own reputation.

"And your grandmother; she's your father's biological mother; how could she say those things?"

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In the case against Dorian, Arabella's accusations weren't the most lethal blow. It was Beatrice coming forward as a false witness that truly turned the tide.

She spun an elaborate tale, down to the specific day and setting of the supposed event. To any reasonable person, it was absurd to believe a mother would falsely accuse her son of such heinous crimes without reason. Unless, of course, it was true.

This logic had swayed public opinion heavily against Dorian. His employer, the prosperous Vanwright Corporation, and even the future in-laws, the Ellington Group, suffered a hit in their stock prices due to the scandal.

Online, there were numerous people stirring up trouble for Vivienne. Whether these were paid trolls or not, it was hard to tell.

"You all know what kind of person Beatrice is, right?" Vivienne's voice was flat.

Beatrice was willing to sever ties with her own son just to get her hands on a perfume formula. She was hardly a saint. But Vivienne didn't believe Beatrice, a woman known for her self-interest, would go so far as to help Arabella frame her own son for no reason.

She also didn't believe that Arabella was reckless enough to destroy her own reputation out of spite, without any ulterior motives. They were likely driven by some kind of gain.

But who could be backing them?

"What do we do now? I went to the police station, but they wouldn't let me see your father." Cordelia choked out.

During an investigation, suspects weren't allowed to see their families.

"I'll handle this." Vivienne said. "You are not to meet with Arabella or anyone from the Hawthorn family."

This matter was highly publicized, so she couldn't use her connections to force the police to release

Dorian. She needed to hire a lawyer and follow the legal procedures.

Cordelia was silent for a moment before saying, "I got a call from Michael today. He wants to meet and discuss the situation."

"Did you agree?" Vivienne's voice dropped a notch.

"Yes."

Vivienne frowned.

Cordelia was desperate, and Vivienne could understand that. If they could convince Beatrice to recant her statement, things would be much easier.

"Cordelia, you don't need to worry about anything. Just stay at home and take care of Thaddeus. Leave everything else to me."

For some reason, Vivienne's calm and collected voice was a great comfort to Cordelia. Slowly, she began to calm down.

With the support of Percival, maybe everything would be alright. It was not their intention to take advantage of their ties with the Ellington family, but sometimes, when things were dire, you had no choice but to rely on family.

"Alright, Vivienne. I'll listen to you."

After comforting Cordelia, Vivienne received a call from Draven before she could even reach out to him.

She exchanged a glance with Percival, who was quietly observing her. With a slight nod, she moved away from him to answer the call by the window.

"We failed." Draven's voice was filled with regret. "We saw only Arabella in the room at the time, so we didn't guard against her, and then this happened."

"It was a trap." Vivienne said. "This was likely targeting me."

She told Draven to pay extra attention to Cordelia and Thaddeus. She didn't want anyone taking advantage of any loopholes.

"Don't worry." Draven reassured her.

"Find out who's backing Arabella." Vivienne ordered.

"Yes."

After hanging up, Vivienne messaged Matthew to hire the best lawyer for Dorian. Only a lawyer could meet with Dorian now and find out the details of the case.

"Vivienne."

Vivienne stood by the window in deep thought. A warm body pressed against her from behind. Percival wrapped his arms around her, gently kissing the top of her head. "Don't worry. We'll clear your dad's name."

He had already contacted his men and all the connections he could use to investigate the case thoroughly and find the puppet master behind Arabella.

"What I'm worried about isn't that." Vivienne said, leaning back against Percival. His support was

comforting in this stressful time.

On her phone was the news of Elijah's arrest. The picture showed a smug Elijah, showing no signs of anger or resentment. From the start, what disconcerted her wasn't Arabella's accusations or Beatrice's false testimony. As long as Dorian was innocent, she could clear his name.

What unsettled her was Elijah.

With his temper that was as readable as an open book, it was expected that he would explode in a fit of rage after being betrayed by Arabella. But why was he laughing so hard instead?

She hoped her guess would not come true.

The most pressing matter now was to get Dorian out of there as soon as possible.

She could've asked Draven to negotiate and get Dorian released quickly. However, such a move would only provoke a fiercer backlash from the public. They had no choice but to let Dorian stay put for now.

At this point, she couldn't afford to take any unconventional actions.

She leaned on Percival, closing her eyes for a moment to clear her mind. Opening them again, she asked, "Can I use your laptop?"

"Sure." Percival fetched his laptop for her.

He sat beside Vivienne, watching her huddle up on the couch with his laptop as her fingers danced rapidly across the keyboard. She was hacking into the surveillance system of the East District hotel, where Dorian had landed in trouble.

The hotel was called the Seaview Express Inn. Within a minute, the surveillance footage from the past few days appeared on the laptop screen.

The budget hotel was far from being a top-notch facility. From the footage, she could see that the corridors were narrow and windowless, and the dark red carpet was old and dirty.

According to what Cordelia knew, Arabella had called Dorian before the incident, sounding as if she were drowning in alcohol. Her words were slurred and unclear, but she kept on pleading for Dorian to pick her up.

The address Arabella gave was this run-down motel.

Despite her betrayal, Arabella was still the girl he had raised, and Dorian couldn't help but soften up.

So he went to pick up Arabella alone, and that's when everything went south.

Chapter 133

Vivienne had watched the entire sequence of Dorian's arrest, from the moment he stepped into the

motel and into the room booked by Arabella to the moment he was taken away by the police. It was a shame that the motel's cameras didn't capture what was happening inside the room.

She had watched the footage from the past few days over and over again, but other than Arabella booking the room alone, she found no other suspicious figures or potential leads.

Unsatisfied, she hacked into every surveillance camera along Arabella's route to the motel, tracing all the way back to the bustling East District's Urban Village.

Arabella had come from there, but the Urban Village was lacking in surveillance cameras. Most of them were broken.

She thought for a moment and reviewed the surveillance footage around the area a day earlier. Then she saw Arabella, barefoot and bruised, fleeing from the Urban Village to a bus stop.

The surveillance footage at the bus stop had been deleted.

Vivienne smirked as her fingers rapidly danced across the keyboard. The deleted footage from the bus stop was quickly recovered.

She saw a man in a black suit whose face was obscured. Only his back was visible.

"This guy?" Percival frowned, staring at the man's figure in the video.

“Do you recognize him?” Vivienne raised an eyebrow.

“I’m not sure. The back looks somewhat familiar, but it’s hard to say without seeing his face,” replied Percival.

Vivienne didn't say anything. She simply took a screenshot of the man's figure, edited the image, and posted it on Twitter.

The caption was one word. “Running?”

As soon as she tweeted it, the comment section exploded with people leaving messages.

“Excuse me, Ms. Hawthorn, or should I say, Master Q. How does it feel knowing your father is a rapist?”

“That figure doesn’t look like Percival. Is Vivienne implying she's cheating?”

“Are you sick? Your father is a rapist who almost raped your sister, and you still have time to post pictures of men? Are you flirting?”

“Did the Ellington family call off the wedding because your father is a rapist, so you quickly found a new man?”

Vivienne didn't pay attention to these internet trolls.

She kept an eye on her Twitter post, waiting for a response.

In less than three minutes, someone tried to hack her Twitter account and delete the photo.

Vivienne smirked as her slender fingers, once again, swiftly danced on her laptop.

Percival watched silently as Vivienne played a cat-and-mouse game with her opponent in the online world. They were tracking and counter-tracking back and forth, like a war without gunfire.

The smile on her lips grew deeper.

This was the Vivienne he was fascinated by. She was full of spirit and unconstrained, as though she had everything under control.

Finally, the other party was cornered. Vivienne had completely shattered their defenses.

At the rooftop private room of the Golden Club.

"Damn it!"

A handsome man watched as his laptop suddenly froze. The screen went black, leaving only Vivienne's screenshot and one provocative word. "Running?"

He smashed his laptop, destroyed the motherboard, grabbed all his belongings, erased his traces, and

quickly left the Golden Club.

His hacking skills were top-notch. There were only a few in the world who could beat him, let alone track him down so quickly.

Who was the other party?

Was it a helper hired by Vivienne?

He hadn't met such an impressive hacker in a long time. The last time he felt like this was against the top hacker from the Dark Web, Shadow Wolf.

But as far as he knew, Shadow Wolf was elusive and hard to hire. He didn't think Vivienne could.

He didn't go far but hid in the shadows to observe. Sure enough, two groups of people rushed into the Golden Club in the next second.

If he hadn't acted decisively and run as soon as he was located, he would have been cornered by now.

He disappeared into the dark corner of the street and walked away. Just as he was leaving, he felt his cell phone vibrating in his pocket.

He picked up, and a voice full of authority and a hint of old age came through. "You shouldn't have left

a trace."

He was silent for a moment and then replied, "It's just a silhouette."

He knew well that a person like him shouldn't leave any suspicious images. But the other party hired a very skilled person. He was sure he had deleted and completely destroyed that segment of surveillance footage, yet it was recovered.

"Couldn't delete it?" The person on the other end seemed to understand.

He remained silent.

The person on the other end chuckled. "It seems you've met your match. Good, stay in Havenwood and flex your muscles."

He coldly responded, "Yes."

"Remember, don't lose." The man said, "You are my greatest creation. If you lose, you know the consequences."

He hung up the phone, his pale face looking even more icy.

Of course, he knew the consequences. A failed creation could only be destroyed.

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Bay Estates.

"He got away." Percival handed Vivienne a glass of water. He had sent a message to Leopold to catch the man as soon as Vivienne located the man's address.

Unfortunately, the man had run too fast.

"It's okay." Vivienne, of course, knew he had escaped. As soon as she located him, she secretly informed Draven.

She knew from the start that the man wouldn't be foolish enough to stay put and wait for them to come for him. But the fact that his last location was the Golden Club, a place her men had thoroughly investigated in their previous case, was a bit surprising.

Did he think that the most dangerous place was often the safest?

He was definitely nothing like the fool, Elijah.

"Let's have dinner." Percival pulled Vivienne up and led her towards the dining table.

Vivienne had only just realized that while she was wrestling with that one individual, Percival had thoughtfully prepared a three-course meal and soup.

She looked at Percival, a bit taken aback, suddenly finding her fiancé to be quite a catch. Not only was he helping her catch the culprit, he was also ensuring she didn't go hungry.

She felt touched. Having someone look after all the little things in life for you truly felt like a blessing.

However, the news that Draven relayed next wasn't as pleasing.

Someone was causing a ruckus at the entrance of Imperial Blossom Nursery, using the incident with

Dorian as an excuse. Cordelia and Thaddeus were nearly victims of an acid attack.

The police had been alerted, and the perpetrator was already in custody.

Upon hearing the news, Vivienne didn't get angry. Instead, she laughed.

She was certain this was the man's retaliation against her.

The smile on her lips grew deeper.

So, it begins?

Very well!

Chapter 134

Cloudcrest High School.

Ordinarily, today was a day without gym class. However, Percival was anxious about Vivienne and had accompanied her to school.

As they arrived at the main entrance, they saw a group of parents outside the gates of Cloudcrest High School, holding up a banner that read, "Expel the criminal's daughter! A pedophile's daughter has no business teaching!"

A middle-aged man was standing on a stone pedestal beside the road, shouting into a megaphone at passersby.

"They say like father, like son, and the same applies to daughters. What kind of girl can be raised by a man who abused his own foster child? Having his daughter as a teacher is not only a bad influence but also a scandal waiting to happen!"

These parents had blocked the entrance, preventing Percival's car from entering.

Without avoiding them, Vivienne got out of the car with a calm look on her face. Percival followed her after signaling to Thomas, the driver.

As soon as Vivienne appeared, the parents immediately recognized her. The man with the megaphone immediately shouted, "That's Vivienne!"

Vivienne ignored them, but Percival shot a cold glance at the man, causing him to shudder and nearly

fall off the pedestal.

Angered, the man started shouting at Vivienne through the megaphone.

"Ms. Vivienne, how dare you show your face at this school?! The girl your father raped was not only his foster child but also a student at this school. I refuse to believe you didn't know about your father's crimes! You're an accomplice! A criminal!"

"Is your child in Class Eighteen?" Vivienne asked, her eyes narrowing in an intense stare.

"No." The man began to answer, then asked suspiciously, "Why are you asking this? Are you planning to retaliate against my son?"

"You are not even associated with my class, so why are you causing a fuss?" Vivienne retorted.

The man was taken aback, then began to shout again, "Even if my son isn't your student, who can feel safe with you lurking around the school?"

Vivienne's eyes narrowed even further, but her face remained emotionless. "So, what do you propose?"

The man shouted defiantly, "Leave Cloudcrest High School! The college entrance test is only a month away. Who knows what could happen in that time?!"

"What happens is none of your business."

Suddenly, a voice scolded him from the side. A parade of luxury cars pulled up to the school entrance, surrounding the protesting parents.

Those unaware of the situation would have thought it was a showdown between rival gangs.

A group of well-dressed men and women got out of the cars and stood in front of Vivienne. They were the parents of Class Eighteen's students, led by Charlotte's grandmother.

She coldly addressed the protesters. "Since Ms. Vivienne came, my granddaughter's grades have improved. She went from failing to ranking in the top hundred. She is a savior for my granddaughter's academic career. I dare anyone to try and kick her out of this school!"

Agreement rippled through the crowd of Class Eighteen parents. Logan's mother, adorned in valuable jewelry, was particularly intimidating, causing the protesters to step back.

Backing up the other parents, Faye's mother, Doreen Baker, was even more direct. Not only did she show up, but she also brought her brother.

Robert, still handsome and suave in middle age, stepped forward and squinted at the protesters. He pointed at Edward, who was trying to disappear into the crowd. "Edward, have you finished your

quarterly reports? Are you playing hooky to cause trouble? Are you asking to be fired?"

"No, Robert, I was wrong. I'll go back to work now. Please don't fire me." Edward pleaded, his face full of regret.

Robert ignored him and continued to single out more employees from among the protesters. Threats of wage and bonus cuts flew, and all attendance records were wiped clean.

The scene at the entrance of Cloudcrest High School was a spectacle, leaving the school staff flabbergasted.

In the end, Vivienne was led into the school by Clara Redwood and Doreen Baker, accompanied by the parents of Class Eighteen. It was a grand spectacle.

Left to the side, Percival could only look in astonishment. "I never imagined this would happen."

Vivienne was genuinely touched by the parents of her students today. When she first became the homeroom teacher at Cloudcrest High School, though it was partially due to a dare from Arabella, she had always given her all to her students in Class Eighteen.

But she never expected anything in return.

Until just now these parents stood in front of her, defending her.

It was only after she got to the classroom that she found out that Charlotte and Logan, upon hearing about the parents who had gathered at the school gates, had informed their own parents.

Even though she could have handled it herself, having someone stand up for her made her feel warm inside. It was just like how her mother would always stand in front of her to shield her from danger ten years ago.

As Clara was leaving, she held on to Vivienne's hand, reluctant to let go. "Vivienne, don't let those rumors get to you. If anyone tries to bully you again, just let me know. I won't do anything but lie on the ground and see if they can continue."

"Thank you, Clara." Vivienne chuckled as a faint smile played on her lips.

"Hey, speaking of which, you haven't visited me in a while, you ungrateful girl." Clara complained.

"Remember to come see me when you're free."

"I will." Vivienne responded with a soft smile.

"Ms. Vivienne, I want to thank you for taking care of Faye." Doreen added, with a grateful look on her face. "She's become much more cheerful since she started school."

And thanks to the medicine Vivienne provided, the scars on Faye's face had been gradually fading, which was a pleasant surprise for both mother and daughter. Even though they had paid for the medicine, they were still incredibly grateful to Vivienne.

So when they heard about what had happened, Doreen immediately informed Clara, and they contacted the other parents from Class Eighteen and hurried over.

As Vivienne was about to return to her office, she saw Mr. James walking towards her with a handsome man of pale complexion by his side.

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Upon seeing her, Mr. James eagerly approached. "Vivienne, this is Felix. The son of an old friend of mine who just returned from studying abroad. He's a genius in the field of electronic engineering, like you. You guys should exchange ideas when you have time."

"Hello, Vivienne."

Vivienne extended her right hand, giving Felix an extra glance. She had seen countless handsome men and beautiful women, but it was the first time she had encountered a man whose beauty was androgynous.

"Hello, Felix."

Although Felix always seemed aloof, he politely shook hands with Vivienne.

"Your colleague was in a car accident yesterday. He's now in the hospital." Mr. James sighed heavily.

"So he won't be able to teach Class Eighteen English anymore."

He then patted Felix on the shoulder, laughing. "Fortunately, Felix is back. With only a little over a month left before the college entrance test, he'll take over the English classes."

Vivienne eyed Felix without saying a word. Seeing this, Felix silently pulled out a teaching certificate from his pocket and handed it to her. "Don't worry." He said stiffly, "I'm certified and can guarantee that I'll take good care of your students."

"Come on, don't be so silly." Mr. James chuckled as his face crinkled like a sunflower. He patted Felix's shoulder and said, "Since I've chosen you, I know you can handle it. Vivienne trusts my judgment, right?"

"Felix, take care." Vivienne nodded without saying much.

After Mr. James and Felix left, she still stood there, staring at Felix's retreating figure.

"Vivienne, you're ogling other men behind my back again." Percival appeared out of nowhere, his tone

somewhat jealous.

"I'm a sucker for good looks." Vivienne laughed lightly. "Who can blame me when the new guy is so handsome?"

"Is he more handsome than me?" Percival glanced at Felix's distant figure, hiding the glint in his eyes, and persistently nagged Vivienne.

"About the same." Vivienne carefully compared them, then added with a smile. "But he's younger than you."

Percival felt as if he had been stabbed in the heart. He wished he could teach this girl a lesson in certain ways, physically demonstrating how young he was.

"Vivienne."

Suddenly, Vivienne heard someone call her. She turned around to see Coral looking at her timidly. "I... I have something to show you."

Percival frowned. Who was this now?

Seeing that no one was speaking, Coral became anxious. "This could prove your father's innocence."

Vivienne and Percival exchanged glances, then both walked toward Coral.

"What is it?" Vivienne asked.

Coral silently showed them a video of Arabella disparaging Dorian's family for being poor and admitting that she enjoyed a luxurious life only because she was with Beatrice.

This video at least proved that Dorian was innocent of child molestation.

"If necessary, I can testify for your father. Arabella has said many derogatory things about you." Coral seemed a bit frantic. "I know I've done many things to hurt you in the past. Consider this video as a part of my apology."

"Thank you. I'll take the video. It might come in handy." Vivienne thanked her after receiving the video from Coral.

But she knew very well that the so-called child molestation and childhood harassment charges were now impossible to investigate due to a lack of evidence. It was impossible to convict Dorian based solely on Beatrice and Arabella's testimonies.

So this wasn't the main issue. The primary concern was the rape case at the motel.

However, she asked Coral curiously, "Why do you believe in my father's innocence?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Coral glanced at Vivienne. "Arabella is a notorious liar. Whatever she says must be false! That's why I believe your father."

With that, she turned and ran off.

Vivienne slightly pursed her lips, suddenly thinking that this girl, who finally stopped being manipulated by Arabella, was quite adorable.

In the afternoon.

After the lawyer successfully met with Dorian, Matthew called Vivienne, his tone a bit off.

"Madam, the lawyer met with your father. According to your father, he received a call from Arabella, begging him to come and rescue her at the motel. He didn't think much and went. However, as soon as he entered, he was knocked out from behind and didn't know what happened next."

"Okay." Vivienne already had a hunch about this situation after watching the surveillance video.

"There's more." Matthew's voice became a bit heavier. "As you predicted, your father was placed in the same cell as Elijah after he was transferred to the detention center."

"Did something happen?" Vivienne's eyes narrowed slightly.

"Yes. Your father was beaten up on his first day in there." Matthew replied in a heavy tone.

Despite this being a predictable situation, Vivienne still took a deep breath before asking, "How badly was he injured?"

"They used a special method, so there are no visible injuries." Matthew sighed. "So the lawyer can't use this as a reason to apply for a cell change."

"Special?" Vivienne frowned.

"They used needles."

"Madam, you are surely aware of how excruciating it can be when those slender cattle hair needles are lodged into your flesh. It causes ineffable pain without leaving a single trace of injury."

Matthew's tone dropped slightly. "That's the exact method they're using to torment your father. He's complained to the wardens, but they've searched his cell. Even with metal detectors, they found nothing. So, they've assumed he's lying and refused to change his cell."

"Those needles are likely not made of metal." Vivienne rubbed her temples.

She had suspected this since seeing the news photos of Elijah's arrest the day before.

The plot to imprison Dorian, regardless of whether his sexual assault charges were substantiated, was

inconsequential. What they truly wanted was to have Dorian confined during his time in the detention center.

Sexual assault cases were notoriously difficult to resolve.

Hence, the investigation stage would be excessively prolonged. During this extensive period, they had ample time to torment Dorian.

And she was left powerless.

"What do they want?" Vivienne asked coldly.

"The perfume formula your mother left behind." Matthew answered.

As expected.

Vivienne let out a cold laugh. "Tell Dorian to give them whatever they want."

"We've told him the same." Matthew sighed again. "But your father is quite stubborn. His lawyer mentioned how he'd been tortured all night. He appeared extremely weak, yet he insisted on not handing over your mother's formula. He said it was something your mother left behind, and it shouldn't be used like this."

Vivienne sometimes thought Dorian was simple, yet other times he seemed incomprehensible.

He appeared weak and helpless in many aspects, but when it came to matters of principle, he was as stubborn as a mule.

"Madam, as a skilled physician, you're well aware that those cattle hair needles, despite causing only minor injuries, could be lethal if lodged in the wrong place." Matthew continued, "And we're unable to request a cell change or even propose bail for your father due to obstruction from some unknown source. Given the current circumstances, what do you think we should do?"

Chapter 136

Vivienne paused for a moment, diligently racking her brain for any loopholes in the intricate scheme laid out before her. Suddenly, an idea struck her. She sprang to her feet and strode towards the door, bumping into Felix as she passed.

Just as she was about to look up, she felt a strong pull dragging her away from Felix.

"Watch out." Percival said while holding her hand.

Felix's gaze briefly lingered on their intertwined hands before he nodded in apology and continued on his path.

"Percival, do you have your laptop in your car?" Vivienne asked abruptly.

"No, it's at home." Percival replied, shaking his head.

"Then take me home now." Without further explanation, Vivienne started towards the elevator.

"What happened?" Percival trailed after her with eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

Ignoring his question, Vivienne rode in silence back to Bay Estates. As soon as they entered the house, she picked up the laptop from the couch and started reviewing the surveillance footage from the motel.

After discovering that a young woman had visited the room a day before Arabella had checked in, Vivienne delved deeper into the young woman's background. She discovered that the woman had previously installed a hidden camera in the room to catch her husband cheating. With this information in mind, Vivienne quickly dialed Matthew.

"Pass the word along. Have the police release a statement about discovering a hidden camera in the room at the motel where the incident occurred."

Being the efficient man he was, Matthew had the news circulated within half an hour. The internet was ablaze with discussions about the hidden camera found in the room where the assault had taken place.

The following afternoon, Vivienne received a call at school.

It was the young woman from the surveillance footage of the motel.

"Ms. Hawthorn, my name is Linda. I have the footage from that day in the room." Linda got straight to the point. "This video can definitely prove your father's innocence. I'm asking for 5 million dollars for it."

"How did you get this video?" Vivienne asked, matching Linda's directness.

"Ah, that." Linda chuckled. "I had previously installed a hidden camera in that room to catch my husband cheating. I forgot to remove it, and it turns out it captured your father's incident."

After a brief pause, Linda continued, "If you don't want the video, I'm considering selling it to someone else. I think your adopted sister would be willing to pay."

"She doesn't have money." Vivienne retorted with a cold laugh.

"Of course, I know you have money. After all, you do have a taste for expensive perfumes." Linda chuckled heartily. "So I came directly to you."

"Give me your address. I'll come to see you tomorrow for a face-to-face transaction." Vivienne decided.

Linda promptly provided her address.

After hanging up the call, Vivienne cast a cautious glance at the corner of the staircase from where

Felix was descending with a stack of books.

However, the next day, Vivienne did not show up at Linda's place. Instead, she was leisurely sipping coffee at a café across the street from Linda's with her laptop in front of her, displaying a live feed of Linda's apartment.

The man sitting across from her, Percival, glanced out the café's window and informed Vivienne. "She's here."

Vivienne followed his gaze and caught sight of Arabella, dressed casually in a tracksuit and a baseball cap, entering the building where Linda lived.

Five minutes later, Arabella appeared on Vivienne's laptop screen in the surveillance feed.

"What are you doing here?" Linda's face paled as she saw Arabella. "Get out!"

Ignoring Linda's protest, Arabella cut to the chase. "I heard you have a video that you want to sell to my sister, Vivienne. I can pay the same price."

"The same price?" Linda scoffed. "If I sell it to you, I want double. 10 million dollars or no deal!"

Taken aback, Arabella snapped. "Are you trying to rip me off?"

"Ha! If I sell the video to Vivienne, I'm helping to clear her father's name. That's a good deed." Linda

replied coldly, with disdain in her eyes. "But selling it to you? That's aiding and abetting. You want me to commit a very heinous act, so I have to charge more."

"Do you really have the footage?" Arabella's face paled.

"Yep, your dad was knocked out as soon as he entered your room." Linda replied nonchalantly.

"So you really did capture everything?" Arabella's laugh was tinged with a hint of unease. "Are you sure you won't sell the video to me?"

"Nope. Your sister has more money. She would probably even pay me 20 million if I asked." Linda looked at Arabella with blatant disregard.

"In that case..." Arabella's eyes darkened. She lunged at Linda and began choking her. "You might as well die."

By the time Vivienne arrived at the scene, Arabella was on top of Linda, choking her and demanding to know the location of the video.

Linda screamed loudly for help.

Vivienne stepped forward and kicked Arabella off Linda.

Arabella sat on the floor, stunned for a moment. Her phone buzzed with a flurry of notifications.

Everything that had just occurred in the room had been uploaded to the internet by Vivienne.

The footage not only proved that Arabella had framed Dorian but also cleared Dorian of all charges.

The twist in the tale left the internet in a state of shock.

Netizens were baffled. Had Arabella lost her mind? Why was she going to such lengths just to frame her adoptive father?

Arabella gazed at the relentless questioning on Twitter as her mind went blank. Suddenly, she snapped back to reality and scoffed at Vivienne. "You're playing me, aren't you? There's no video, is there?"

No one responded to her. Vivienne and Linda simply watched her in silence.

The police officer Vivienne had called walked in at that moment, handcuffed Arabella, and led her away.

Arabella was right. It was all a ruse. There was no video.

It was all a con to trap Arabella.

Who would have thought she'd fall for it so easily?

When Vivienne received a call from Matthew, informing her that Dorian had been released, she and

Percival were quietly tucked away at school.

Matthew was incredulous on the phone. "Madam, you're incredible. How did you know it would be

Arabella, that dope, who would go after the woman instead of GTO directly taking care of it?"

"Because GTO was afraid that even if they took out Linda, they wouldn't find the video, and maybe that

fabricated video would end up in my hands." Vivienne replied with a slight chuckle. "So they let

Arabella take the first step."

Thankfully, Arabella was as dim-witted as she had expected.

Vivienne had simply set a trap. She deliberately misled the police and spread false news of a pinhole

camera found in the room.

Then, she had manipulated Linda, coaxing her to spread the rumor that she held a video that could

prove Dorian's innocence, and lured her into making contact.

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Arabella became restless when she heard that a video capturing her framing Dorian existed, especially

after realizing that Linda had been in contact with Vivienne.

The people at GTO investigated whether Linda had indeed tried to uncover an affair the day before.

Linda had indeed installed a hidden camera in that room to catch her husband and his mistress in the act, and she had indeed recorded a video of her husband's infidelity.

But the camera she had installed was removed the day she caught him.

But Arabella didn't know, and neither did GTO.

After confirming that Linda had installed a hidden camera, they began to suspect the rest.

And so, they fell into Vivienne's trap.

"Madam, how did you know it was Arabella who knocked your dad out?" Matthew was puzzled. "Even your dad doesn't know. He was knocked out as soon as he walked in and didn't see anything. It could have been someone else who was hiding in the room ahead of time, couldn't it?"

If Linda hadn't mentioned this, Arabella might not have been tricked into revealing the truth so quickly.

It was indeed her who knocked out Dorian. Arabella became incredibly afraid upon hearing this and believed Linda had caught her red-handed. In a fit of panic, she tried to strangle Linda and demanded the video evidence.

"I guessed." Vivienne said flatly.

Vivienne paused before saying, "Go and take an IQ test."

Matthew was taken aback. "That's a personal attack."

Whether Arabella had knocked out Dorian was Vivienne's guess based on Dorian's statement. She wasn't sure if it was the truth.

Perhaps there was someone else hiding in that room that day who had knocked Dorian out.

She had checked the surveillance footage of the motel and found no one other than Arabella entering that room. The people she had sent to follow and protect Dorian found no one leaving the room after the incident.

"Your dad's been released, but he's not doing well. He's been taken to the hospital. You should go see him."

Vivienne's eyes turned icy. "What happened?"

Matthew hesitated, then replied, "Elijah's gang found out your dad was being released, so they decided to make their move."

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At the hospital.

When Vivienne and Percival arrived, Dorian had already been taken to the operating room. Cordelia was waiting anxiously in the family waiting area with Thaddeus, and even Jaylan Lockwood and Herman were there.

"Vivienne, you're here?" Cordelia wiped her tears as she saw Vivienne and Percival enter the waiting room. She tried to smile, but her lips wouldn't lift.

"Aunt Cordelia, what did the doctor say?" Vivienne's stunning face was covered in a layer of frost, and her entire demeanor was off-putting.

"The doctor said..." Cordelia choked on her words and started crying again. "Your dad had over twenty needles stuck in him. Two of them pierced his lung. They need to operate to remove them."

Vivienne's heart filled with rage. It was the first time she felt such an intense urge to kill.

She had rescued Dorian in the quickest way possible, yet he had still been harmed.

Elijah's gang, aware that Dorian was about to be released, decided to make a clean sweep and use this to get back at her.

Arabella and Elijah deserved to die!

That shadowy figure needed to be dealt with too!

Percival took Vivienne's hand, trying to calm her fury. He turned to Herman and said, "Is this how you treat people?"

"I'm sorry; we're truly sorry." Herman, despite not being responsible for the prison, felt guilty since the police were all one unit.

Dorian was clearly wronged, and yet he was seriously injured within 48 hours of his arrival at the prison. It was only natural that Herman would apologize.

Vivienne was reasonable and didn't vent her anger on him, but merely nodded coldly.

Percival held her hand and whispered, "Don't worry. The warden and his superior won't be in their positions for long."

Everyone knew that Elijah and Vivienne were enemies, yet the police still placed Dorian in the same cell as him. Their intentions were clear. It was unlikely that there wasn't some conspiracy behind it.

They probably didn't expect Elijah, in his fury and desperation, to cause such a serious incident.

An innocent suspect was subjected to vigilante justice in prison. Those unaware might think it was police torture.

And now that things had escalated to this point, with no media outlets picking up on the news, it was clear that someone was suppressing the information.

Vivienne wouldn't let them get their way. She coolly composed a tweet about the incident and posted it.

Within half an hour, reporters filled the area outside the operating room, having gotten wind of the news.

Herman and Jaylan looked helplessly at the microphones thrust in their faces, but they couldn't do anything about it. They knew Vivienne wasn't wrong.

Soon, news of Dorian, an innocent man who was framed by his adopted daughter, being severely beaten in prison by his cellmate and sent to the hospital spread across the internet.

As Vivienne had expected, many netizens began to suspect that the police had used torture on Dorian, and when things got out of hand, they used his cellmate as a scapegoat.

However, when it was revealed that Elijah was Dorian's cellmate, people's opinions changed.

Many people vented on Twitter. "Wasn't the news of Elijah kidnapping Vivienne's student all over the news? How could the police not know?"

"You're right! How could they not know? That young girl named Riley was the one the cops rescued,

wasn't she? They knew full well that Elijah had a beef with Vivienne, and yet they locked this

dangerous man up with Vivienne's father. There's something fishy going on; I'm sure of it."

"Agreed!"

Of course, there were some dissenting voices as well. "Isn't Arabella Elijah's disciple? Dorian assaulted

Arabella, so isn't it normal for Elijah to take revenge for his disciple?"

"Bullshit! Have you got a leak in your brain, mate? Elijah was arrested because Arabella reported him.

There's no way he was taking revenge for Arabella. It's clear as day that he was seizing the opportunity

to retaliate against Vivienne."

The same person countered. "Have you all forgotten that even though Dorian cleared his name of

assault, the case of his predilection for minors and his indecent behavior with young girls is still up in

the air? Isn't it too early to sympathize with him?"

"Given that Arabella could now frame her own foster father for assault, I'm sure she's also lying about

the whole pedophilia and indecency thing."

"Exactly. Isn't Arabella known for her lies and false accusations? She accused her foster sister before,

and now she's framing her own foster father. If I ever believe a word she says again, I'll live stream eating a hot dog covered in ants!"

"Same here!"

"I'll live stream eating a burger upside down!"

"Hats off to the guy above."

Then someone dropped a cold laughter emoji. "Why don't you guys go and check out the latest news about Arabella?"

Chapter 138

Hospital Waiting Room.

The wall-mounted TV in the room flicked on to the Havenwood News. Vivienne watched as Arabella's pitiful face appeared on the screen, surrounded by reporters.

Arabella was charged with defamation. A criminal case couldn't be pursued until Dorian was out of surgery, and making a false police report could be dismissed with a fine, especially for a first-time offender.

Arabella had paid her fine and was released in less than a day.

Reporters were waiting for her as she stepped out of the police station.

On the news, Arabella, with tears streaming down her face, looked into the camera. "I framed my foster

father because he really did molest me when I was a child. I wanted revenge, so I did what I did.

I was so young and defenseless, but I remember everything he did to me. I have nightmares every

night... I can't let him go unpunished!"

Cordelia sprang to her feet in a rage. "How dare she?!" She exclaimed to Vivienne. "After what she did

to Dorian, she still has the gall to slander him! Is she even human?"

Cordelia was shaking with anger. During the two days Dorian was in custody, she and Thaddeus had

been the target of gossip and even an attempted acid attack.

Dorian was just released, but he had to be rushed into surgery. It seemed like Arabella just refused to

let him be.

Vivienne squinted her eyes, staring at Arabella's face on the screen. She felt that merely bankrupting

the Hawthorn family had been far too lenient.

"Cordelia, calm down." Percival tried to soothe her. "We won't let Dorian bear this slander."

Cordelia had barely sat down when a reporter on TV asked Arabella, "Miss Arabella, if what you're

saying is true, why didn't you report it at the time?"

"It's all my fault!"

Cordelia was shocked to see Beatrice appear on the screen. Her face was full of sorrow and shame as she stood by Arabella and addressed the reporters. "I was the one who asked Arabella not to report it for the sake of my third son's future.

After that, I kept her close to me to protect her. I thought if I, an old woman, treated her well enough, she could forget what happened. But I didn't expect her to still harbor resentment and do such a ridiculous thing now."

Beatrice turned to the camera with a pleading look. "I hope everyone can forgive Arabella for what she's done. Please consider that she's just a poor kid."

After she finished, she and Arabella hugged each other, both looking utterly dejected.

Cordelia was livid after watching the news. She was speechless with rage. She couldn't believe that her own family could be so cruel.

Did Beatrice not realize that her lies could ruin Dorian, Thaddeus, and even their entire family?

The tide of public opinion was turning again, with many saying that if Dorian really was a pedophile who

molested Arabella when she was a child, then he deserved what was happening to him.

Cordelia was scrolling through the derogatory comments about Dorian on Twitter as tears began streaming down her face.

Vivienne felt a burning rage when she saw her like this.

Arabella really loved pushing her luck.

Without any expression, Vivienne sent out the video Coral had given her earlier.

The video was taken in Coral's study. Coral's mother had installed a camera to monitor her daughter's studies. For many years, the stored videos were never deleted. When Coral heard that Dorian was in trouble, she decide to find it.

In the video, Arabella was chatting with Coral in her study.

Coral asked Arabella, "Why do you live with your granny instead of your parents?"

Arabella, then only eleven or twelve and not adept at hiding her feelings, made a face of disgust.

"My dad and mom are so poor that even if they give me their best, it's not as good as what Granny can give me from her spare change. I want a better life, so of course, I have to suck up to Granny."

She lounged on Coral's couch, swinging her leg, and confidently continued, "You see, Michael and Joseph's children wear designer clothes worth thousands of dollars. But if I were with my parents, I could only wear clothes worth a few hundred dollars, which they could buy only by scrimping and saving. I don't know why they insisted on being so stubborn when they could have a better life by sucking up to Granny."

Netizens were stunned by the video. Arabella was so young, but her values were already so skewed.

The video clearly showed that Arabella chose to live with Beatrice because she was materialistic, not because Dorian molested her and Beatrice was keeping her close to protect her, as they claimed.

Vivienne quickly tapped on her phone, sending out another video. It was from the day Dorian took her and Cordelia to the Hawthorn Mansion to sever ties with Beatrice.

She had never removed the Hawthorn family's surveillance cameras.

Beatrice had tried to find the cameras but failed. She assumed they had been removed.

As the video wrapped up, Dorian turned to Arabella and said, "Arabella, tell me truthfully, didn't my wife and I go without food and clothing for two years so that you could have enough? Thaddeus is my own son, and there were times when he went hungry, but didn't I always make sure you never had to?"

The social media community was left in utter disbelief. They started commenting, "Did Dorian adopt a daughter or a devil?"

The couple had scrimped and saved, even sacrificing their own son's needs, just to make sure Arabella was well fed and dressed. And what was their reward for all of this?

They got a daughter who chose wealth over kindness. A daughter who cosied up to Beatrice and left her adopted parents in the dirt.

Their reward was an adopted daughter who, after eight years, repeatedly smeared their names and even accused Dorian of a serious crime, leading to him being severely injured. Even when Dorian was still in surgery, she didn't forget to tarnish their name to clear her own.

This kind of daughter was nothing short of a demon.

And what about Beatrice? This old crone.

Arabella being adopted was bad enough, but Beatrice was Dorian's own mother! How could she help a foster granddaughter ruin her own son?

They had cut ties, so she could no longer get benefits from Dorian. For this simple reason, she decided

to destroy him.

This kind of mother was even scarier than Arabella.

The live broadcast from Havenwood News was on the television screen. After Vivienne had released the videos, the journalists at the scene had naturally seen the content.

Those who had initially sympathized with Arabella and Beatrice quickly changed their tune. The seemingly pitiful girl and elderly woman in front of them now seemed like two demons in disguise.

Unaware of the tide turning against her, Arabella continued to address the cameras. "I truly apologize for this wastage of police resources. But I have no regrets; I will never forgive that demon, Dorian! I..."

Just as the word "demon" left her lips, a rotten egg was splattered on her face.

Arabella was momentarily stunned. Before she could react, another egg hit her, followed by a voice shouting, "You have the audacity to talk about forgiveness?! Why don't you ask your adopted father if he forgives his lying daughter?!"

Immediately after, a barrage of rotten eggs and spoiled vegetables rained down on Arabella and Beatrice. Some even threw stones.

Chapter 139

As the camera panned in the news report, a crowd of infuriated locals, unable to bear Arabella's

audacious lies, flocked to the scene to give her a piece of their minds.

The turnout was so massive that it caused traffic congestion outside the precinct, forcing the police to step in to maintain order.

However, perhaps because they too were fed up with Arabella's actions, the officers only kept the crowd from disrupting traffic, not from attacking Arabella.

Arabella and Beatrice were bombarded. They screamed nonstop. They had bleeding wounds and disheveled appearances. Yet not a single soul showed them sympathy.

Finally, Arabella and Beatrice were hauled away by an ambulance.

Coincidentally, they were taken to the same hospital where Dorian was staying.

Dorian had just been wheeled out of the operating room at that time, with Vivienne and others accompanying him. They overheard the nurses whispering. "You know the girl and the old woman who were just brought in?"

"The ones from the news who falsely accused their relative of pedophilia and indecency?"

"Right. They both had their heads cracked open. When we stitched them up, we intentionally reduced

the dose of anesthesia. They were crying out in pain!"

"Good job!"

The nurses chuckled and walked away.

Vivienne glanced at Dorian, who was still under the influence of anesthesia and sound asleep.

He had lost a significant amount of weight during his two-day stint in detention. He had dark circles

under his eyes, and his cheeks and temples were sunken. It was clear that he had been through hell.

Recalling the twenty-three stitches the surgeon had shown her earlier, Vivienne's lips curled into a cold smile.

Arabella! Good! This was just the beginning, as long as you can bear my tactics.

Cordelia had been muttering that once Dorian woke up, they should sue Arabella for defamation.

To Vivienne, compared to the harm Arabella had inflicted on Dorian and his family, this was hardly a punishment.

Sensing her thoughts, Percival lowered his voice and said, "Not satisfied?"

Vivienne simply looked at him, waiting for him to continue.

"Vivienne, if I can make you feel better, can I ask you a favor?" Percival smiled.

"A favor?" Vivienne raised an eyebrow in question.

"Don't worry, it's nothing outrageous." Percival assured her.

"What are you thinking?" Vivienne was genuinely curious about his intentions.

"Just wait and see." Percival said with a mysterious grin.

"I'm waiting." Vivienne said with a smile.

She had intended to take matters into her own hands, but since Percival offered to step in, she was happy to sit back and watch.

Arabella, being young, recovered quickly despite the beating. Beatrice, however, being an elderly woman, had a harder time. She had to stay in the hospital.

Despite Elijah paying off the Hawthorn family's debts, they still couldn't afford a caretaker. The rest of the Hawthorn family had been sent to the countryside when they went bankrupt. So, it was up to Michael and Joseph to take turns caring for Beatrice.

Upon learning that Dorian was also in the same hospital, Michael and Joseph avoided Vivienne and Cordelia like the plague, fearing retribution.

Fortunately, Cordelia was too focused on caring for Dorian to bother with them.

As for Vivienne, she merely glanced at them with cold eyes and ignored them.

The Hawthorns were now destitute. Beatrice couldn't afford a private room. The other patients in the ward, aware of Beatrice and Arabella's scandal, were extremely cold towards them. Even the doctors and nurses often couldn't help but roll their eyes at them.

In their words, they were professionals and usually didn't behave this way. However, they just couldn't help it this time.

One night, during their shift change at 9 p.m., Joseph couldn't help but complain to Beatrice.

"Arabella is getting out of hand! She doesn't help take care of you when you're sick; she doesn't even bring food. She shows up for a moment, then disappears!"

"Yeah, we're the ones doing all the hard work, and she doesn't lift a finger." Michael added grumpily.

"It's because of her that you're in here, isn't it? She has the audacity to stroll around like nothing happened!"

"You don't understand." Beatrice scolded them. "Arabella is trying to contact those people. We did what we were supposed to do. It's not our fault it didn't work. I've thrown away my dignity for this, and any

semblance of a relationship with Dorian is gone. They need to fulfill their promise!"

"You believe her?!" Michael retorted. "The schemers have all fled, leaving only Elijah in detention awaiting sentencing. How can Arabella find anyone? We've been used and discarded!"

Beatrice was livid. Before framing Dorian, the mysterious man had promised a significant amount of money to help the Hawthorn family recover. But they were tricked.

"From now on, don't listen to Arabella's nonsense." Michael continued. "If it weren't for her stirring up trouble everywhere, would we be in this mess? Every day we're in this hospital, we are at risk of Vivienne sending Percival after us."

Joseph scoffed. "Instead of banking on her, you'd be better off trying to connect with the relatives in Rivenwood. After all, we share some blood; they might be willing to lend us a hand."

The relatives in Rivenwood...

Beatrice's gaze flickered.

The Hawthorn family in Havenwood was a branch that had splintered off from the Brooks family in Rivenwood. She had once harbored grand ambitions of surpassing them.

But now, those ambitions were futile. She felt like a beaten dog that was begging for scraps.

Thinking about this made Beatrice feel a sharp pain in her chest. She had been diagnosed with high blood pressure and warned to avoid stress, lest she risk a stroke.

"Forget it; we'll discuss this after mom is discharged." After noticing Beatrice's state, Joseph quickly gave Michael a knowing look. "I'm leaving first."

Michael nodded, watching as a weary Joseph left.

He chatted with Beatrice for a while. Once she fell asleep, he lay down on his own cot.

As soon as he closed his eyes, Beatrice's phone rang.

After picking it up, he saw it was Arabella. He immediately hung up and turned off the phone.

He was full of resentment towards Arabella. If not for her slandering Vivienne on Twitter, he would still be the successful man everyone wanted to associate with, not someone who couldn't even afford a caretaker.

The more he thought about it, the more he saw Arabella as a nuisance. Almost all the conflicts with Vivienne were stirred up by her.

He didn't understand why Beatrice was so enamored with her.

As he was lost in thought, his own phone lit up. It was Arabella again.

He scoffed, hung up, and turned off his phone.

It was late at night, so she probably didn't bring any good news. They had enough problems already.

Whatever mess she got herself into, she could handle it herself.

In Dorian's private hospital room, even though Vivienne had hired two caretakers to look after him

around the clock, Cordelia remained. Worry was etched all over her face.

So she had sent Thaddeus to Percival's apartment for Vivienne to look after him while she stayed here.

As she was checking Dorian's IV drip, one of the nurses suddenly said, "Madam, Mr. Hawthorn's phone

just lit up."

Chapter 140

As Cordelia picked up her phone, she was baffled to see Arabella's name flash on the screen. A surge

of anger welled within her, but she answered the call anyway.

Arabella's sobbing voice filled the air around the phone. "Dad! You need to come and save me! I've

been locked up..."

"What? Are you trying to set your dad up again using the same old trick?" Cordelia interrupted her as a

bitter laugh escaped her lips.

Arabella seemed taken aback on the other end of the line. "Mom..."

"Don't call me mom. I can't bear the weight of it." Cordelia retorted coldly. "Your dad is still bedridden due to your antics. What are you scheming this time?"

"No, mom, it's different now. I'm really in trouble." Arabella's voice was filled with desperation, and her breath was heavy as if she were on the run.

But Cordelia was not about to be fooled again. Even if she believed Arabella, she wouldn't bother to help. Her heart was already battered and bruised.

Cordelia cut Arabella off in a stern tone. "Arabella, the biggest regret your dad and I have in this life is adopting you. Now that we've severed ties, please stop bothering us."

With that, she ended the call with a harsh click and followed Michael's lead by switching off Dorian's phone.

Even turning off Dorian's phone wasn't enough. She turned off her own too.

The mere thought of Arabella made her sick.

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East District.

Arabella wasn't lying to Beatrice. She had been trying to contact the mysterious man since that day.

Unfortunately, as soon as their plot to frame Dorian was exposed, that man and his gang disappeared without a trace.

Left with no other choice, she had to track Elijah's lawyer in an attempt to find him.

She believed if the man had gone to the lengths of hiring a lawyer for Elijah, he wouldn't abandon him.

He must still be in touch with the lawyer.

But to her dismay, she lost track of Elijah's lawyer upon reaching the East District.

It was already late, but she thought about how those people had been hiding in the most chaotic part of the East District, Urban Village. So she decided to try her luck.

Little did she expect to be targeted by three thugs not long after she entered Urban Village.

They stalked her to a secluded grove, where they began to make their move.

One of them blocked her path and smirked. "What brings a pretty little thing like you to such a dangerous place at this hour, huh?"

Startled, she heard another one say, "What else could it be? She's probably lonely and looking for some fun."

The remaining one reached out to grab her. "Well then, we'll keep you company tonight."

"Get lost!" Arabella shrieked, dodging his hand.

"You ungrateful wench! You'll regret it!" One of the men snarled.

Instinctively, Arabella turned and ran. She blindly dashed into the nearby woods, dialing 911 as she ran. "I need help! Three men are trying to rape me!"

"Ma'am, can you please provide your exact location?" A dispatcher replied urgently.

"I'm in the woods near Urban Village in the East District!" Arabella glanced behind her and saw that the men were gaining on her. Panic set in, and she screamed, "Hurry up! They're catching up to me!"

"There are two urban villages in the East District. Which one are you near, and in which grove?" The dispatcher inquired frantically.

"Serenity Lane's Urban Village. I don't know which grove I'm in!" Arabella was unfamiliar with the East District, let alone the numerous groves. She was on the verge of tears. "Please hurry."

"Damn, she's on the phone with the cops! Let's finish her off!" One of the men chasing Arabella

shouted.

"Why bother killing her?" Another one sneered. "Let's have our fun, then sell her. Ivan needs kidneys, right? Let's sell one of hers first, then let her work."

The more Arabella heard, the colder her heart felt. She sped up, but the path ahead was pitch black.

She had no idea where she was and could only run blindly with tears streaming down her face.

Suddenly, she spotted a few large houses enclosed by tall walls ahead. It looked like a hospital. The small door at the bottom left of the main gate was half open. Without thinking, she dashed through and slammed it shut behind her.

"Damn!" Unable to enter, the thugs kicked the metal door and walked off.

Arabella was surprised they didn't try to climb over the gate or the wall. They left without a fuss.

She stood in the dark yard, startled by a chuckle from the shadows.

She spun around to see a chubby man in hospital attire grinning at her. "Miss, are...are you here to marry me?"

Arabella recoiled as the man lunged at her. She quickly backed away and ran into the closest house.

"Bride, don't...don't run!" The fat man giggled while chasing after her.

Arabella found herself in a hospital ward and hid under a bed. The chubby man found her room quickly, calling out for his 'bride' while lifting up the covers of each bed.

The patients in the room were disturbed. Someone snapped on the lights, and another started yelling,

"Fatso, are you asking for trouble?"

Another patient, awoken by the commotion, began to wail.

Arabella stayed still under the bed, baffled at the lack of staff intervention in this bizarre private hospital.

"Bride, bride, bride!" The fat man's voice grew louder. "I saw you come in here!"

Annoyed, one of the patients suggested, "Did you check under the beds?"

Arabella's heart pounded in her chest. The next second, the fat man's drooling face appeared under the bed, reaching out to grab her.

She let out a piercing scream, attempting to back away, but was caught off guard by another man on her other side. He dragged her out into the open.

She was tossed onto the cold floor. Using the dim light provided, she managed to make out the faces of

four other men in the room.

One had a crooked eye and a twisted mouth.

Another had a menacing look in his eyes.

One was constantly muttering gibberish under his breath.

The only one who seemed somewhat normal was brandishing a crude knife that was carved out of wood. He sneered at her. "Looks like a tasty morsel."

The chubby, cross-eyed man quickly intervened. "No, no way; she's my gal! You can't have her!"

The brooding man chimed in. "What a waste it would be to devour her straight away. It's much better to have some fun first, then eat."

Arabella was trembling. Under the glaring light, she could clearly see the words "N&S Psychiatric Hospital" on their hospital gowns.