

Million-Dollar 141

Chapter 141

N&S Psychiatric Hospital in Havenwood was steeped in urban legends. It was said that many of the patients locked within its walls were not just mentally ill but dangerous criminals who, due to their psychological conditions, could not be incarcerated in a regular prison.

Even the doctors and nurses who work there have been known to fear some of the patients. Aside from confining them within the hospital, they seldom exerted further control. In fact, it was rumored that staff members had been killed by patients on occasion.

Now, Arabella found herself in a truly terrifying situation. Surrounded by five menacing men, she screamed out in fear. Kicking the brooding figure who grabbed her, she scrambled to her feet and took off running.

She dashed down the corridor, passing many patients who were wandering aimlessly, engaging in bizarre behaviors that marked them as anything but normal.

Some patients ignored her, others beckoned her to join their games with eerie grins, and some lunged towards her with twisted faces and terrifying shouts.

The commotion of her footsteps and screams woke the sleeping patients in nearby rooms. Lights flickered on one by one, revealing dozens of mentally ill individuals who emerged to either observe her with indifferent eyes or leer at her with unsettling smiles.

The man chasing her, a rather large individual, was still bellowing behind her, demanding that she become his wife.

"Open up! Hurry! Open the door!" Arabella fled back to the main entrance, but she had previously locked the small door in her panic. She banged on the security office window, shouting for help, but the room inside was pitch black, void of any sign of life.

Terror gripped her, causing her body to tremble as she broke down into a fit of desperate crying.

She made another frantic call to the police. Before the operator could even respond, she cried out,

"Why haven't you sent anyone to save me yet?! I'm at N&S Psychiatric Hospital! Please! Send someone to help me!"

Just as she finished her plea, the large man caught up to her once again. She spun around and dashed away, darting around the hospital like a scared animal, playing a horrifying game of hide-and-seek with her pursuer.

In her desperation, she attempted to call the Hawthorn family for help. She reached out to Joseph first, but was promptly declined. The same happened when she tried to contact Michael and Beatrice. All of them had switched off their phones.

The chilling automated message, "The number you are trying to reach is currently unavailable," sent a shiver down Arabella's spine.

Who else could help her?

Suddenly, she saw Dorian's name in her contacts, and a spark of hope ignited within her.

Yes, she still had a foster father. She still had a dad.

Dorian would surely come to her rescue, just like he did the last time.

But her hope was quickly extinguished when Cordelia, Dorian's wife, answered the phone. She dismissively refused to believe Arabella's plea for help, accusing her of trying to trap Dorian again.

Arabella was reminded of the story of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."

She realized that whether it was Cordelia or Dorian, they would never come to her aid again, no matter the circumstances. She had squandered all the goodwill between them.

When Cordelia hung up the phone, Arabella felt herself teetering on the brink of despair.

But then she spotted a man sitting on a bench in the deserted corridor. He had shaggy hair, wore black-rimmed glasses, and was dressed in a hospital gown. He was absorbed in a medical textbook in his hands.

Spotting the title "Hippocrates' Corpus" on the cover, Arabella felt a surge of hope.

Surely, someone who read medical books must have been kind-hearted. He would surely help her.

"Sir, please help me!" Arabella pleaded while tugging at the man's clothes. "Someone is chasing me.

I'm terrified!"

"How did you get in here?" The man looked up from his book, casting a curious glance at Arabella, who was not dressed in the usual patient attire. "This isn't a place you can just waltz into."

"I don't know! I was being chased, and I saw the door open, so I ran in to hide. I didn't know this was a mental hospital." Arabella cried as she explained.

"That's quite peculiar." The man mumbled, his eyes hidden behind his glasses, glinting with intrigue.

"My wife! My wife!" The large man's voice grew closer.

"He's coming! Please help me hide!" Arabella's hand trembled as she clung to the man's clothes.

"That's my room over there. You can hide in it." The man kindly pointed to a room across the corridor.

Arabella hesitated.

"Don't worry. It's a single room. There's nobody strange inside." The man reassured her in a gentle voice.

"Thank you, thank you." Arabella muttered her gratitude before darting into the man's room.

She hid inside, listening as the large man's heavy footsteps approached. He queried the bespectacled man. "Bro, have you seen my wife?"

Arabella's heart skipped a beat.

"No." The man with the glasses responded.

Arabella's heart settled.

"That's... that's strange. I saw her run... run this way." The large man gnawed on his fingers, his anxiety mounting as he started to yell and cry. "I... I want my wife! My wife... my wife..."

"Hush!" The bespectacled man raised a finger to his lips, signaling for silence before gently coaxing him. "I'll help you look for her, okay?"

The large man, seemingly a bit scared of him, stopped his tantrum and nodded.

Arabella listened closely as the two men's footsteps receded. Their search took them to various places.

The corner with a giant potted plant, the cabinets in the main hall, and the stairwell. Each time, the

bespectacled man sighed in disappointment. "She's not here."

Unable to find Arabella, the large man grew increasingly anxious, his fingernails bloody from his

anxious gnawing. He looked ready to start yelling again.

"Hush!" The bespectacled man gestured for silence again before suggesting, "Let's go look in another

place, okay?"

The large man, still seemingly afraid of him, nodded in agreement.

As Arabella heard their footsteps growing fainter, her frantic heartbeat finally calmed down.

She took a moment to observe her temporary sanctuary. The room was clean, and the bed was neatly

made with sheets that bore the "N&S Psychiatric Hospital" logo.

The table beside the bed was stacked with books, mostly medical textbooks.

She breathed a sigh of relief, grateful to have put her trust in the right man. Now, she was safe. She

pulled out her phone, intending to call the police again, only to find that her battery was dead.

She internally cursed the unreliable police; she couldn't understand why they hadn't shown up yet.

She'd given them the exact location.

She thought about her previous calls to the Hawthorn family and about Dorian as anger bubbled within her, especially towards Cordelia. She'd answered her call only to cruelly reject her, giving her hope and then snuffing it out. It was truly wicked.

So what if she'd lied once before?

Would Cordelia treat Thaddeus or Vivienne this way? In the end, it was all because she was an adopted child.

Once she escaped, she would make Cordelia pay!

As she gritted her teeth and plotted her revenge, the door to the room was suddenly flung open. The man with black-framed glasses pointed at her, telling the chubby man next to him, "Look, your wife's been found."

Arabella's face turned deathly pale. She stared incredulously at the man in glasses, who still held a copy of "Hippocrates' Corpus" in his left hand. His smile carried an unspeakable malice.

"Wife!" The chubby man slobbered, laughing as he lunged at her.

Arabella let out a shrill scream, dodging him and running for the door.

She was grabbed by the man in glasses, who dragged her by her hair back to the chubby man. He

then picked up a folding chair from the side, asking, "Do you know what to do when your wife

misbehaves?"

The chubby man gnawed on his finger, asking, "Make babies with her?"

A wave of revulsion and terror rose in Arabella's heart.

The man in glasses laughed. "No. You break her legs."

He lifted the folding chair high, and with Arabella watching in horror, he mercilessly smashed it down on

her left leg.

"Aaaahhhh!"

Arabella's piercing scream echoed through the entire hospital.

The man in glasses dropped the chair, smiling as he watched the chubby man drag Arabella back into

the room while her broken leg left a fresh trail of blood on the floor.

Through her pain-blurred vision, Arabella saw him pick up the medical book again, reading it with

relish.

Today, heaven and hell were only separated by one small step.

Chapter 142

On Victory Avenue.

In order to enjoy some alone time with Vivienne, Percival had persuaded Cecilia to help look after

Thaddeus, who had just been handed to them.

Cecilia had grown fond of Vivienne, and naturally, her affection had extended to Thaddeus too.

Ever since the high society ladies had discovered that Master Q was to be her future daughter-in-law,

they had been going out of their way to win her over, hoping she could persuade Vivienne to create

perfumes for them.

Even the wife of a notable figure in Rivenwood had actively reached out to her, and they had become

close friends. She really had been enjoying her newfound popularity.

Hence, she was more than happy to help look after Thaddeus so her son could speed things up with

Vivienne.

Thaddeus was a little shy, but since Isolde was also staying at Cecilia's and Percival had deliberately

let Isolde taste Vivienne's disastrous cooking, she packed his bags and fled without looking back.

On their way back to the apartment after dropping off Thaddeus, Percival was driving and answering a call from Leopold via Bluetooth.

Leopold said, "It's done. She's been sent in."

Percival replied, "Keep an eye on her!"

Laughing, Leopold retorted. "Who do you think you're underestimating? Do you think I'd be careless? If anyone in there got out, the police would have a massive headache. This should be enough for her to handle.

Mr. Ellington, you're quite ruthless for sending that delicate girl to such a place. Who knew you had it in you?!"

Percival, nonchalantly steering the wheel, responded, "I didn't send her in. She went in herself."

"Right, right." Leopold replied, inwardly rolling his eyes. As if Percival hadn't purposely driven Arabella towards the N&S Psychiatric Hospital.

"By the way, I've noticed you've gotten sneakier since being with your fiancée. Did you learn it from her?"

"I can hear you." Vivienne interjected, her expression unreadable.

Caught off guard, Leopold chuckled awkwardly. "You two really are inseparable, huh?"

"Where did you send her?" Vivienne asked Percival.

"N&S Psychiatric Hospital." Leopold answered with a smirk.

Vivienne looked slightly surprised. Although she had only recently returned to Havenwood, she had heard of the infamous inmates at the N&S Psychiatric Hospital.

Apparently, a brutal serial killer had once tried to evade the police by hiding there, only to end up being tortured by the inmates to the point where he called the police to rescue him, preferring the death penalty over staying there.

Vivienne hadn't expected Percival to send Arabella there. This was interesting.

"Vivienne, you're smiling." Percival noticed, grinning as he drove. "I'm glad I could make you happy.

Just don't forget about our deal."

Suddenly, a large truck hauling a shipping container from the opposite lane veered off course and

charged towards Percival's car. Percival swerved sharply, narrowly avoiding a collision. The truck, too

heavy to control, crashed into the roadside trees.

"What happened?!" Leopold, still on the call, asked urgently.

"We've been attacked." Percival answered coldly while looking at the four black cars blocking their path.

"Dammit!" Leopold cursed. "I'm tracking your location now!"

As Leopold hung up, one of the black cars gunned its engine and charged towards them. Percival quickly reversed, narrowly avoiding the oncoming vehicle.

The other three cars followed suit, revving their engines in pursuit. Despite driving in reverse, Percival maneuvered the car effortlessly, dodging their attempts to ram him.

After a moment of this cat-and-mouse chase, Percival found an opportunity to swerve around one of the black cars, switching direction and speeding forward.

Once going forward, the black cars realized that Percival, driving in reverse, had been going slow.

Now, he increased his speed, darting through oncoming traffic with nimble dexterity, maintaining speed as he continued forward.

Vivienne, holding onto the car's roof handle, watched Percival. His drifting technique was reminiscent of

an underground racer she knew, Zephyr.

During an underground race in Seaside City years ago, Zephyr had nearly beaten her with his impressive drifting technique.

Suddenly, someone from one of the pursuing cars drew a gun and fired at them.

The first shot shattered the rear-view mirror on the driver's side.

A second shot pierced through the rear windshield, breaking a perfume ornament inside the car.

The unique scent of Timeless Man Cologne filled the vehicle.

Vivienne couldn't suppress a smirk. She had noticed earlier that Percival had replaced all his car and home air fresheners with her custom-made scent, 'Timeless Man Cologne.'

What a hypocrite!

Didn't he quite fancy it?

Among the strong scent of cologne, Percival was mentally cursing. After today, he would make sure to make all his vehicles bulletproof.

Suddenly, another gunshot came from the left rear, piercing through the car window. Percival felt a

sharp pain in his left arm, but he still held the steering wheel steady.

He knew he had been shot in the arm, and he might not hold on for long. But when he glanced at

Vivienne sitting next to him, he gritted his teeth and pressed harder on the gas pedal.

Blood was flowing from his wound, mixing with the smell of rust and cologne inside the car, providing an unpleasant and nerve-wracking mixture.

Vivienne glanced at his trembling left hand and could clearly feel the car slowing down.

In the distance, two large semi-trucks appeared that were pulling containers behind them. They seemed to be aiming to block their path with the vehicles.

Those four black cars from behind them were still clinging to them. She saw the gunman reloading his gun.

"Switch places." She quickly unbuckled her seat belt, grabbed the steering wheel with her right hand, and said to Percival, "I'll take over."

Percival looked at her in surprise, but she had already unbuckled his seat belt and squeezed herself between him and the steering wheel. Her feet replaced his on the gas and brake pedals, and she sat on him to drive the car.

Through the thin layer of clothing, Percival could distinctly feel Vivienne's warm body temperature as she sat directly on his lap.

He knew in this critical moment that he should not be distracted. But he was losing control.

"You're still in high spirits despite being shot!" Vivienne also noticed the sudden change in his body. Her ears blushed red, and she reprimanded him grumpily.

Percival couldn't find the right words to respond.

Chapter 143

He didn't mean for it to happen. He was innocent!

The girl he was hopelessly enamored with somehow ended up in his lap, bouncing along with the motion of the car. Each time she worked the clutch or pressed the accelerator, their bodies would shift together, sending sparks through his nerves.

He was just a regular guy.

"Move over and buckle up." Vivienne said as her cheeks flushed a deep red.

Percival managed to extricate himself from the awkward position, a maneuver that inevitably led to some unintentional contact that left both of them blushing.

Safely in the passenger seat, Percival fastened his own seat belt after helping Vivienne with hers.

Vivienne had already floored the gas pedal, sending the car careening forward. She positioned the vehicle across the road, blocking the path of two oncoming semi-trucks.

The two semis were facing each other, leaving only a narrow gap between them.

"Hold on!" She commanded in a cold voice.

Percival clung to the handle above his door with his uninjured hand. Their car was speeding towards the semi-trucks.

At the last possible moment, Vivienne swerved. The right tires lifted off the ground, and the car tilted onto its side.

Percival shot Vivienne a surprised look. Her driving reminded him of a street racer he once knew.

This man was known as Thor, notorious for driving like wild wind, unruly, and untamed. He was a legend in the racing world.

His record on the winding mountain roads of Seaside City had remained unbeaten to this day.

While Percival was still processing this revelation, Vivienne had already maneuvered the car through the narrow gap between the two semi-trucks.

The four cars behind them were blocked by the trucks they had arranged as a roadblock, essentially shooting themselves in the foot.

Once the car was safely back on all four wheels, Percival noticed a flicker of something unidentifiable in Vivienne's eyes.

He had lost again.

His Vivienne could always surprise him; her strength was beyond his comprehension.

By the time the semis managed to move out of the way, Vivienne and Percival were already out of sight.

On the way back to Bay Estates, Leopold called. "Percival, what's the situation?"

"We lost them." Percival responded, his face pale from blood loss. "Did you catch anyone?"

"We were too late." Leopold replied bitterly, "They had already left by the time we got there. But they left one of the semis behind. We might get something from it."

"Alright, they fired shots." Percival said quietly, "We should have the car towed and check where the bullets came from."

"They shot at you?" Leopold immediately became anxious. "Are you both okay?"

"I took a bullet to the left arm." Percival replied before hanging up and leaning back against the seat.

"What's wrong?" Vivienne asked, noticing his face was growing paler. It was even slightly blue. Given the amount of blood he had lost, this didn't make sense.

Upon closer inspection, she noticed that the blood seeping from Percival's wound was a dark purple color. This had been masked by his black shirt earlier.

"The bullet was likely poisoned." Percival murmured with his eyes still closed.

"Why didn't you say so earlier?!" Vivienne quickly gave him a life-saving pill and then sped up the car.

"I didn't want you to be distracted." Percival sighed; his main concern had been Vivienne's safety, especially since their pursuers were armed.

"What happened to the life-saving pills I gave you?" Vivienne asked, her brows furrowed.

"I gave them to people who needed them more." Percival replied with a faint smile.

His team members often faced life-threatening risks on their missions. Considering his own survival skills, he had given all the life-saving pills Vivienne had given him to Leopold to distribute among his team, keeping none for himself.

Vivienne didn't say anything and just sped back to Bay Estates.

Given that Percival had sustained a gunshot wound, they couldn't go to the hospital. It would raise too many questions.

Once they had stealthily parked the now unrecognizable car in the underground parking lot, Vivienne used a car cover to hide the bullet holes. Then she helped Percival into the elevator, and they ascended to the penthouse.

Back in the apartment, Vivienne had Percival remove his shirt to reveal his muscular upper body. She inspected his wound on the couch and found that half of his arm had turned a ghastly purple.

Wolf venom!

Vivienne quickly retrieved an antidote for Percival to ingest.

If they had waited any longer, his whole arm would have decayed and needed to be amputated.

After taking the antidote, Percival's complexion improved slightly.

Vivienne brought out her medical kit, preparing to remove the bullet. She checked the medical supplies she had brought. "I don't have any anesthetics. This is going to hurt."

"Okay." Percival nodded.

Vivienne didn't waste any more time. She disinfected the wound and then used a small surgical knife to cut through the muscle of Percival's left arm. Dark purple blood gushed out.

She quickly inserted a few silver needles to stop the bleeding.

Percival clenched his jaw, not making a sound. But the fine beads of sweat on his forehead betrayed the amount of pain he was in.

Vivienne gave him a look, then used a pair of tweezers to remove the bullet and place it on a piece of gauze on the table.

Once the venomous blood had been drained, Percival's left arm gradually returned to its normal color.

Vivienne checked the wound again and said, "Fortunately, the bullet didn't hit any arteries or bone. But the venom is problematic. The medicine I have can't completely detoxify you. We need two more herbs.

Star Grass and Seven-Poison Flower. But don't worry; as long as I'm here, you'll be fine."

As she spoke, she disinfected and bandaged his wound once more.

Once everything was taken care of, Percival slumped onto the couch, his muscles finally relaxing after the intense pain.

Just then, the apartment door was flung open as Leopold rushed in with a doctor. He saw Vivienne packing up her medical tools and Percival with his bandaged left arm. Slapping his forehead, he said, "Look at me, all flustered. How could I forget your fiancée is more skilled than any other doctor?"

"The bullet." Vivienne handed the extracted bullet to Leopold, warning, "It's poisoned."

"Damn! Who are these people to be so ruthless?" Leopold gingerly took the bullet that was stained with Percival's blood. Then he winked at Percival. "Your fiancée is not ordinary, huh? Bullet and poison, yet her face doesn't even change color."

Percival always knew Vivienne was extraordinary from the first time they met.

"Stop talking nonsense and get to work." He said weakly as he tossed the car keys to Leopold.

"Roger that!" After catching the keys, Leopold quickly left with the doctor.

When the apartment was quiet again, Percival looked at Vivienne's beautiful profile under the lamplight and said weakly, "Vivienne, it hurts."

Vivienne paused her cleaning. "There's nothing I can do about the pain. Want me to give you a shot for it?"

"Come here; let me hold you. It'll hurt less." Percival whispered.

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His voice held a rare tinge of vulnerability. After a moment of hesitation, Vivienne moved to his side, allowing him to wrap his right arm around her. She rested her head on his shoulder, and in no time at all, Percival drifted into sleep.

Vivienne gently removed his arm and dialed Matthew's number.

"I couldn't find the two ingredients you asked for on the black market." Matthew informed her over the phone.

"Keep looking." Vivienne commanded him. After pausing briefly, she said, "Put the word out that anyone who has these ingredients and is willing to part with them will be owed a favor by me."

Her favors were rare and precious. They were sometimes powerful enough to cheat death.

She believed that once this message was out, the items she sought would find their way to her.

"It seems you do care a lot about your fiancé." Matthew commented after an unexpected pause.

Vivienne didn't confirm or deny it. She simply hung up.

She glanced at Percival, who lay on the couch with his eyes closed.

Did she care?

Perhaps.

After all, he had always been good to her.

"Percival." She murmured while gently patting his face.

There was no response. He was running a low fever from the poison, and she could feel the heat radiating from him.

"Mr. Wolf." Vivienne called softly.

Percival opened his eyes slightly to look at her. She helped him up. "Let's get you to bed."

He nodded. His lips pressed together as she supported him up the stairs to the bedroom. His nearly six-foot-three frame weighed heavily on Vivienne.

Finally, she managed to get him into the room and settled him onto the bed, where he promptly fell back into slumber.

After a moment of hesitation, she fetched a basin of warm water from the bathroom. She used a wet towel to carefully wipe away the sweat on his face and body, then placed a damp cloth on his forehead to bring down his temperature.

Just as she was about to pull away, Percival grabbed her hand, mumbling while half-sleeping.

"Vivienne, don't go."

Vivienne froze. She then sighed and lay down beside him, fully clothed, allowing him to hold her hand.

Late into the night, Percival suddenly spiked a high fever, and Vivienne had to administer fever reducers.

He was delirious for most of the night, refusing to let go of her even in sleep. Vivienne was forced to stay awake and keep watch over him.

As dawn approached, Matthew called.

"We have leads on the Star Grass and the Seven-Poison Flower."

"Is the owner willing to part with them?" Vivienne asked eagerly.

"They are, but..." Matthew began hesitantly.

"Speak your mind." Vivienne urged him impatiently.

"The Seven-Poison Flower is with Brody."

Matthew let out a long sigh. "Brody is a nutcase. Ever since you beat him once, he's been looking for a rematch. If you win, the flower is yours. But if you lose..."

"He wants me to be his guinea pig?" Vivienne scoffed.

"No, he wants to turn you into a specimen."

Vivienne remembered how Brody had once stormed a high-security prison, using almost a hundred

inmates as test subjects. By the time the Nine Mystics Society arrived, the scene looked like it was

straight out of the horror game 'Resident Evil.' Many were so horrified that they vomited on the spot.

They had been trying to capture him ever since, but he was elusive. Now, he was practically delivering

himself to them.

"I'll take him on." Vivienne laughed coldly. "The higher-ups have been wanting to nab him, right?"

Prepare to capture him once the match is over. That way, I wouldn't have to break my promise."

Matthew paused before replying, "As for the Star Grass, it's with the Owl."

The Owl was a high-ranking figure in GTO. His exact status within the organization was unknown.

His appearance, age, and abilities were all mysteries. He was a man who left no traces, a hallmark of

GTO's upper echelon.

"His terms?" Vivienne asked coldly.

"He didn't specify but said that he's keeping this favor for later." Matthew knew how much Vivienne despised GTO because of her mother's experiences.

"I agree." Vivienne replied after a moment of silence.

Matthew sighed. Technically, with Vivienne's medical skills, they could wait for the ingredients.

However...

By agreeing to this, she would owe the Owl.

But Vivienne didn't seem to want to dwell on this. "As for Brody, set up a time with him. The sooner, the better."

"He's a lunatic and a sadist." Matthew cautioned her. "Be careful."

"You should worry about Brody." Vivienne retorted casually.

"I'm just worried that you'll let your feelings cloud your judgment." Matthew sighed.

Vivienne glanced at Percival beside her. He was asleep, but his brows were furrowed in discomfort while his right hand still held on to her left.

Would she let her feelings get in the way?

Two hours later, the Star Grass was delivered. Vivienne inspected it carefully, ensuring that it hadn't

been tampered with, before notifying Matthew.

The meeting location with Brody was also set. The address Matthew sent made her pause. N&S

Psychiatric Hospital?

So that freak, Brody, had been hiding out in Havenwood, tucked away in the N&S Psychiatric Hospital,

huh?

Quite the coincidence, wasn't it?

And their showdown was set for tonight.

Percival has been out cold all day. Vivienne, concerned about his strength, hooked him up to an IV drip

and changed the dressing on his wounds.

The lingering effects of the poison still left a tinge of blue-purple on his arm.

When Leopold saw this, he felt a chill run down his spine. Thank God for Vivienne. The doctor he

brought yesterday wouldn't have been able to save Percival's arm.

As the time for her appointment with Brody approached, Vivienne handed over the care of Percival to

Leopold and prepared to leave.

"Who's this guy you're getting the antidote from? It's not dangerous, is it?" Leopold asked, a trace of concern in his voice.

"Just another nut job." Vivienne replied.

Leopold blinked in surprise.

Vivienne added, "As for danger... it's just a bit."

But a defeated enemy was hardly a threat to worry about.

Chapter 145

N&S Psychiatric Hospital.

By the time Vivienne arrived, the sky had turned black, and the hospital building looked hauntingly ominous in the dark.

She wore a sophisticated ghost mask on her face, standing with her hands in her pockets before the large iron gate of the hospital. Soon, a small door creaked open from inside.

As she stepped through the small iron gate, it banged shut behind her.

Without looking back, she continued walking forward, only to see a plump man sitting on the steps of the hospital building, tilting his head and drooling. His eyes were red, as if he had been crying.

He was the only one in the courtyard, so Vivienne took an extra glance at him. Upon seeing her, he

immediately smiled at her, staring at the ghost mask on her face. "Miss, what's that that you're... you're wearing? It's... it's so scary."

Vivienne didn't answer and just stood in front of him, looking down at him coldly. He wanted to reach out and touch her ghost mask, but was frightened by her icy gaze and withdrew his hand. "I... I just wanted to... to see if you... you're pretty."

"Am I pretty?" Vivienne asked coldly.

"Miss, your voice...is nice." The plump man started laughing again. "If... if you're pretty, then become my wife."

But it seemed like he remembered something sad and immediately started crying again. "They... they... they took away my... my wife! They... they... said... said I'm impotent, so there's no... no point in me having a wife."

Then he started bawling. "Give me back my wife! I want my wife!"

"Shut up, you fatso! You're so noisy!" A gloomy-faced man walked out of the building and shouted at the plump man. "What are you shouting for?! You're impotent! What do you need a woman for?! Of

course, they're for us!"

After scolding him, the man looked Vivienne up and down, licked his lips, and said, "Even with the mask, her figure is top-notch. Brody didn't mention that a woman was coming tonight."

He tried to pounce on Vivienne with a lecherous smile but found himself suddenly unable to move, standing stiffly in place. He looked at Vivienne in horror. "What... What did you do to me?!"

"You've been poisoned." Vivienne bypassed him and walked into the hospital building.

"Poison?!" The man was taken aback and started shouting, "You bastard! You actually poisoned me!

Brody, come out and cure me!"

No one responded to him.

As soon as Vivienne entered the building, she saw a dozen or so patients wandering around the corridor. As soon as they saw her, they wanted to pounce on her, but before they could get within three steps of her, she moved her fingertips slightly, and all the patients stood still.

She immediately noticed that all of these people had been poisoned by Brody.

She walked to the patient relaxation area of the hospital. Almost every row of chairs in the hall was occupied by a few patients, except for the middle row of benches, where only one man sat. He wore

black-rimmed glasses and a hospital gown, leisurely reading a medical book.

The scene was quite eerie.

"You're still as morbid as ever." Vivienne glanced at the patients in the hall. All of them were frozen in place, looking at her in either fear or confusion.

Brody looked up, pushing up his black-rimmed glasses, and smiled at Vivienne. His tone was polite and gentle. He sounded nothing like a madman. "Specter Healer, you finally agreed to see me."

"If you're so eager to see me, why not obediently go to prison? I might visit you once a year." Vivienne said leisurely.

"Only if you're not afraid that I'll turn the prison into a poison lab." Brody replied with a smile.

"Enough chit-chat." Vivienne said coldly, "I'm in a hurry."

"Ah, you're still as impatient as ever." Brody shook his head in resignation. A fanatic look appeared in his eyes as he looked at Vivienne. "Turning you into a part of my collection would be beautiful."

"What's the game?" Vivienne didn't want to say another word to him.

"Simple. Best two out of three." Brody stood up from the bench, gesturing to the paralyzed patients in

the hall. "For the first round, let's see who can poison more people in a minute."

"No." Vivienne shook her head. "How about we see if my detoxifying methods can beat your poison?"

Poisoning someone was easier than healing someone, so it seemed that Vivienne was at a disadvantage.

"So arrogant!" Brody scoffed, and as his laughter fell, the patients in the first row began to froth at the mouth. Those in the second row turned pale, and those in the third row turned red. Their eyes were bulging from intense pain.

Then it was the fourth row, the fifth row...

Vivienne stood still against Brody's arrogant laughter, only moving her fingertips slightly. Starting from the first row, all the patients immediately improved.

Brody's face changed. He snapped the book in his hands shut, and another handful of poison powder was scattered.

Not only did the previously immobilized patients' conditions worsen again, but they also all suddenly stood up. While dancing and howling, they pounced on Vivienne.

Vivienne's eyes narrowed slightly. With a slight move of her right hand, in the next second, these

people all stumbled and fell to the ground, once again unable to move.

Brody snorted coldly, and a strange scent suddenly emanated from his body. The patients began to struggle to get up again.

Vivienne lifted her hand. A flash of cold light emanated from her hand, and numerous silver needles precisely hit the patients. They all froze on the ground again.

Brody's face darkened. He also threw out a few silver needles, but Vivienne almost simultaneously countered. The silver needles shot from her hand knocked down Brody's silver needles mid-air.

The needles fell silently.

"One minute is up. I won." Vivienne said slowly.

The hall fell silent for a moment, and Brody's face turned ugly. Since his debut as Brody, he had never failed, but he had lost to Specter Healer again and again.

"There are two more rounds." He emphasized reluctantly.

Vivienne shrugged, showing that nothing he could do would faze her. She was ready for anything.

"Fatso!" Brody shouted.

The plump man who had been crying on the stairs came running over, drooling.

"Go bring your wife over!" Brody ordered coldly.

"Oh, okay." The plump man drooled and trotted off.

After a while, the only sound to be heard was the squeaking of wheels on the tile floor as the plump man pushed a hospital bed back into the room. On it lay a woman who was as stiff as a board.

Vivienne squinted and furrowed her brows, taking a moment to recognize that the woman on the bed was Arabella.

In less than a day, Arabella looked as if she had been transformed. After being tormented by the lunatics that inhabited this hospital, her face was a mess of bruises and swelling, and her clothes were tattered and stained with blood.

The exposed parts of her skin were an alarming mix of blue and purple, with numerous bite marks. One of her legs was twisted in an unnatural angle. It was clearly broken. It was as if she'd been caught in a bar brawl rather than a hospital.

Chapter 146

Arabella lay motionless on the hospital bed with her eyes wide open. The steady stream of tears from her eyes told a tale of sheer terror.

Thankfully, Vivienne was masked at the moment because if Arabella let Vivienne see the fear reflected in her own eyes, she might have wished for death right there.

Vivienne squinted slightly at Brody, silently questioning his intentions.

"Two miniature bombs have been forcefully lodged into her body, one on either side of her abdomen."

Upon seeing Vivienne's eyes harden, a smug smile appeared on Brody's face. "Relax. At most, she'd be the only one to blow up; we'd be safe. I value my life, after all."

Vivienne's eyes turned frostier.

This damn psychopath!

"We compete on who performs the surgery faster and more precisely. Whoever can extract the bomb first with an endoscope wins. By the way, I've set the bombs to detonate in one minute. Be careful; a slight mishap could trigger an early explosion."

"Right here?" Vivienne surveyed the hall with a furrowed brow.

"Don't worry, a sterilized operating room and sanitized equipment have all been prepared." Brody responded while gesturing for Vivienne to proceed.

Upon Brody's signal, the chubby man grasped Arabella's bed and wheeled her into an operating room.

Two endoscope apparatuses were ready in the operating room.

This was a mental institution. They wouldn't normally have such surgical equipment. This was clearly

Brody's doing.

Once Arabella was wheeled into the operating room, the chubby man, following Brody's instructions,

used the straps typically used to restrain patients to secure Arabella to the operating table. He gave her

a kind smile. "Darling, you need to be good. Listen to what Brody says."

After saying that, he exited the room under Arabella's hateful stare.

Just as he left, Vivienne and Brody, now fully sterilized, entered.

Brody's eyes, hidden behind his glasses, brimmed with malicious intent. He looked at Arabella, who

was lying on the operating table, and spoke in a soft tone, "Although the drug I gave you has rendered

you immobile, you can still feel pain. So, we'll try to be gentle during the procedure to minimize your

discomfort."

After hearing this, Arabella's eyes widened in fear. Yet she couldn't move her mouth to curse or beg. All

she could do was cry silently.

Vivienne spared Arabella a glance, with no reaction to what Brody had just said. She had no sympathy for Arabella, who had brought this upon herself.

Moreover, Dorian was still bedridden in the hospital. Recalling his torment in the detention center and the twenty-three needles extracted from his body, Vivienne felt Arabella's current suffering was far from enough.

So, she had no intention of administering an anesthetic.

"Let's begin." Vivienne said coldly.

Brody pulled out a switch, smiled at Vivienne, and gently pressed it. "The bombs are activated."

Vivienne shot him a cold glance, moved to Arabella's left side, uncovered her abdomen, and quickly started the operation with the surgical tools.

Both Vivienne and Brody were geniuses in the medical field. A simple endoscopic surgery was not a challenge for them. The real challenge was extracting the bombs without triggering them or causing harm to Arabella.

As soon as the two endoscopes entered Arabella's abdomen, her face turned deathly pale from the

pain.

She was fully aware of the two small incisions made in her abdomen and the objects inserted into her.

The pain was unbearable; she wished she could pass out.

However, all her instincts were screaming for her not to faint since she knew that bombs were inside her body.

Ever since she entered the N&S Psychiatric Hospital, she had witnessed the depths of Brody's insanity.

He seemed to rule the patients in the hospital. Everyone followed his orders, and he had access to all kinds of tools.

Since he said there were bombs inside her, there must be bombs.

So, she couldn't faint; she was afraid that if she did, Vivienne and Brody might accidentally trigger the bombs, and she wouldn't even know how she died.

Vivienne didn't care about Arabella's thoughts or her pain.

As a doctor, she didn't intentionally enlarge the incisions or harm Arabella's organs with the endoscopic tools.

She located the bomb on the left side accurately on the screen, and in less than thirty seconds, she

successfully extracted the bomb before Brody did and stopped the countdown.

"You've lost again." Vivienne said to Brody while holding the bomb. "I've already won two rounds. I don't think there's a need for a third."

"Damn!" Brody grabbed the scalpel and made a rough incision in Arabella's abdomen, then quickly extracted the bomb he had spotted earlier with the endoscope.

Arabella's pain was so intense that her eyes rolled into the back of her head. If she could move, she might have bitten her tongue off from the pain.

Brody didn't even bother to suture her wound; he just tossed the bomb aside. "I never knew you performed major surgeries. How did you do it so quickly and accurately?"

"There's a lot you don't know about me." Vivienne didn't pay attention to Arabella, who was bleeding due to Brody's rough treatment. She just extended her hand towards Brody. "The Seven-Poison Flower."

"No!" Brody started to act out. "One last round, then I'll give it to you!"

"You set the rule of best two out of three." Vivienne replied calmly.

"As long as you compete with me one more time, win or lose, I'll give you the Seven-Poison Flower."

Brody insisted stubbornly.

"Hand me the Seven-Poison Flower first, then we'll duel." Vivienne stated coolly.

A duel was fine, but only after she secured what she desired.

"Alright." Brody seemed to agree, yet a hint of suspicion was present in his tone. "You're not planning to take the Seven-Poison Flower and run off, are you?"

"I always keep my word." Vivienne retorted, feeling somewhat exasperated.

After she agreed, Brody promptly pulled out the Seven-Poison Flower and tossed it to Vivienne.

Vivienne caught the flower, inspecting it thoroughly to ensure its authenticity before stowing it away.

She folded her arms and declared her intent. "In the first two rounds, you posed the challenge. This final round, I call the shots."

"Fine by me." Brody smirked nonchalantly. As long as he got to match his skills against Vivienne's, he didn't care about the details.

"I wonder if you'll be able to evade my capture tonight or if you'll slip through my fingers." Vivienne laughed.

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Before her voice had even faded, she was already charging at Brody.

His face swiftly changed. He darted out of the operating room and flung a handful of poisonous powder at Vivienne. She couldn't care less and reached forward to grab his shoulder.

He deftly avoided her grasp as his hand shot out silver needles, which Vivienne easily deflected with her own.

The members of the Nine Mystics Society, who had been lurking outside the hospital, stormed in upon hearing Vivienne's signal through her micro earpiece.

Draven had once witnessed Brody turn a maximum-security prison into a scene straight out of 'Resident Evil.'

Entering, he was worried that he would once again bear witness to such a horrific sight, leading to a difficult cleanup afterward.

Yet, seeing the people strewn across the lobby unharmed, save for one poisoned individual by the entrance and another in the operating room, he felt slightly relieved.

When their young master was around, she could keep Brody's unpredictable nature in check.

Meanwhile, Brody and Vivienne had continued their fight from the hospital building to the courtyard.

After being surrounded by members of the Nine Mystics Society, Brody sneered. "Specter Healer, you can't claim victory by capturing me with others' help."

"They're my people. If they catch you, then I win." Vivienne replied nonchalantly, ignoring his mockery.

"You can call your people to help you."

She flashed a mocking smile towards the hospital building. "Oh, I forgot; you've poisoned them all."

"They can hardly be called my people." Brody laughed. "They're more like my playthings. They're not even worthy of being called test subjects."

Suddenly, he seized a chubby figure who had been standing by, drooling as he watched them. "Let me go, or I'll kill him." He threatened Vivienne.

"Why should I let you go for him? He's your man." Vivienne said, finding the situation amusing.

"He's just a mentally ill fool. He's not one of mine." Brody retorted, pressing a knife to the chubby man's throat. "You know why I poisoned everyone in the hospital but him? It was to guard against this very situation."

Vivienne fell silent, and her eyes became cold.

"You people always act holier, claiming to be on the side of justice." Brody taunted them. "So even if my

hostage is a mentally ill patient who's useless to society, you have to let me go to save his life."

He was right. Even though this drooling, chubby man was a mentally ill patient who could potentially

cause harm, Vivienne and her team couldn't just leave him to his fate.

"Specter Healer, you can't catch me." Brody asserted while dragging the confused, chubby man

towards the gate.

"Brody?" The chubby man asked, drooling and cocking his head in confusion.

"Shut up." Brody ordered him as he coldly retreated step by step.

Vivienne and the members of the Nine Mystics Society could only watch helplessly, unable to

intervene.

"Are we really just going to let him go, boss?" Draven asked, frustration clear on his face.

Vivienne didn't answer.

Just as Brody was about to exit the gate with the chubby man, Vivienne made her move. She tossed a

paralyzing powder towards Brody.

This was a minor nuisance for Brody, but it was enough to delay him for a moment.

In that moment, the chubby man's face changed. He swiftly jabbed Brody in several key pressure points with silver needles.

Caught off guard, Brody was paralyzed and frozen in place.

"You?" Brody exclaimed while looking at the man, who had suddenly stopped drooling and tilting his head. His demeanor had completely changed.

"You lose again." Vivienne told Brody.

"He's not your man!" Brody argued. "How can you say I lost?"

"Who said I wasn't one of her men?" The chubby man laughed, then turned to Vivienne and complained. "Vivienne, do you have any idea how long I've been chasing Brody? Just when I was about to gain his trust, you guys showed up. Now I have to split my bounty with you, don't I?"

"Brian, you disappeared to become a bounty hunter for years and didn't send a single message."

Vivienne shot him a cold look. "Consider the bounty as your contribution to the team."

"Hey, hey, Vivienne, that's not how it works." Brian complained and grimaced. "You don't know how alert Brody is. I've had to play the fool for so long just to get close to him. It was a lot of hard work; I've

been at it for half a year!"

He spoke clearly now. His tone was normal, and his demeanor was serious with a hint of ruthlessness.

A stark contrast to the man who had been shouting for a wife all day.

Brody remembered a famous bounty hunter known as Brian. No criminal, whether A-class or S-class, ever escaped his pursuit.

He had never expected a bounty hunter to endure so much humiliation, acting like a madman for half a year and doing countless absurd things in front of him. That's why he hadn't suspected him.

Ironically, the insurance he had left for himself had become the shackles that ensnared him.

"You haven't done anything illegal, have you?" Vivienne asked Brian sternly.

"No, no, absolutely not." Brian quickly denied. "Vivienne, I didn't even touch that girl inside. They all thought I was impotent. So all I did was hold her hand before they took her away."

He sat at the entrance of the building today. The moment he saw Vivienne stride in, he hastily pleaded his innocence.

At this, he began to grumble. "Do you have any idea how hard it is to pretend to be incapable for six

months, especially in front of a tough guy like Brody? So, about the bounty..."

"Shut up." Vivienne interrupted him. She was clearly irritated.

"Hehhehheh." Brody chuckled while listening to their conversation. "You guys don't really think that capturing me means I can't escape, do you?"

"No worries; run if you want to." Brian nonchalantly waved his hand. "But wait until I've collected the bounty. Then you can run, and I can catch you again for another reward. After all, it's not easy to find an SS-class wanted criminal like you."

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Brody ground his teeth, shooting a sarcastic smile at Brian. "Why don't we do more jobs together, make some big bucks, and split the rewards fifty-fifty?"

"Hell yeah!"

Brian's eyes lit up. He jumped to his feet and started to calculate. "Each time I catch you, I get a bounty of thirty million from the boss. Split in half, that's fifteen million each. A few more jobs, and we could buy a mansion in Rivenwood."

"Shut up!" Draven saw Vivienne's displeased face, walked over, and gave Brian a swift kick in the ass.

While leading him away, he politely apologized to Brody. "Sorry for the interruption; our big man here

was a notorious bed-wetter as a kid. He probably messed up his brain.”

Brody snorted and ignored him, turning his gaze to Vivienne. “Specter Healer, I’ll come looking for you if I survive.”

Vivienne’s beautiful brows furrowed slightly. She ordered her men to bind Brody immediately.

As he watched them approach with handcuffs and shackles, a shadowy glint flickered in Brody’s eyes.

As they drew near, he suddenly spat out several silver needles aimed at their faces.

Vivienne was already prepared for his move. Her eyes turned icy cold as she swiftly moved forward.

Her right hand snatched at that air and effortlessly captured the needles between her fingers, blocking the attack.

“Taste your own poison.” She retorted, flicking the needles back at Brody. He grunted in pain as his eyes filled with rage, but he was powerless to retaliate.

Brody was a tricky one. Nobody knew how many poisons he had concealed on him. So, Vivienne took it upon herself to shackle him.

Even so, she felt that he was still extremely dangerous. Percival was waiting for her at home to cure his

poisoning. She couldn't personally escort Brody.

Thinking it over, she decided to propose a challenge to Brody. "How about another contest?"

"What kind of contest?" Brody's eyes suddenly brightened.

"You're not allowed to escape until you've neutralized all the new poisons I've developed." Vivienne

stated. She grabbed Brody's chin and, without any hesitation, shoved a handful of medicinal herbs into

his mouth.

After administering the poison, she sprinkled a pile of toxic powder over him and stabbed him with

several needles.

Brody, however, didn't seem to mind. He cheerfully let Vivienne do her thing.

Onlookers watched in awe as the two interacted. They couldn't decide who was more terrifying. Brody

or the emotionless Vivienne, who had just administered a series of poisons.

"Heh! Don't worry; I'll neutralize these petty poisons before they even get me to the police station."

Brody confidently exclaimed, "And when I do, I will come looking for you!"

Vivienne gave him a captivating smile. "Really? Let's see how long it will take you to find me."

Despite the agreement with Brody, everyone else remained on high alert.

The cuffs and shackles weren't enough. They suited him up in a hazmat suit, even covering his mouth, before leading him to the prison van.

It hardly looked like they were arresting a man. It seemed more like they were capturing a dangerous, wild beast.

Once the prison van carrying Brody was gone, Draven brought out a stretcher. "Boss, what do we do with this one?"

Lying on the stretcher was Arabella, unconscious due to excessive blood loss. Her hand was pressed against her abdomen. Although the bleeding had stopped, her face was deathly pale.

"Leave her to the police." Vivienne coldly said before walking away. "You guys clean up the rest."

Draven watched her hurried figure. He couldn't help but sigh too. The boss sure had a lot on her plate.

...

Bay Estates.

When Vivienne arrived, Leopold was in a state of panic. Percival's fever had suddenly spiked, and the doctor Leopold had brought couldn't do anything about it.

After seeing Vivienne, he heaved a sigh of relief, quickly leading her to the bedroom. "Please check on him. His temperature has risen to 39°C. If it goes any further, I fear he might have brain damage."

In the bedroom, Percival was lying on an expensive leather bed. His entire body was slightly reddened due to the fever, and his face showed a faint hint of a bluish-gray tint.

Vivienne furrowed her brows, quickly moving to Percival's side to check him. As she suspected, it was a high fever caused by residual poisoning.

She took out the recently acquired Seven-Poison Flower and the Star Grass that arrived earlier in the day, combined them to make an antidote, and administered it to Percival. She then began to use acupuncture to assist in detoxification.

Soon, Percival's body temperature began to drop.

The doctor brought by Leopold, Uriah, was a medical scholar who had studied abroad. Being one of their own, he had heard of Vivienne's exceptional medical skills.

When Vivienne was treating Percival, he stood by and watched attentively without missing a beat.

After watching Vivienne effortlessly handle the illness that had him stumped, Uriah approached her with admiration. "Ms. Hawthorn, what was the remedy you used on Mr. Ellington?"

Just as Vivienne was about to answer, Percival gave an uncomfortable groan.

“Don’t bother her!” Leopold quickly pulled Uriah up and dragged him out of the room. “You can ask your questions later.”

Uriah was crestfallen. He had no idea when he would get another chance to see Vivienne.

Percival was extremely possessive. Other than Thomas and Leopold, he was reluctant to let Vivienne interact with anyone else.

After sending Uriah away, Leopold returned to Percival’s bedroom, only to find Vivienne had fallen asleep on the bed.

After last night’s high-speed chase and the exhausting events at N&S Psychiatric Hospital, Vivienne was completely drained.

Leopold gazed at her retreating figure as a hint of surprise flickered in his eyes. Truth be told, he’d always believed that in the dance of attraction between Percival and Vivienne, it was Percival who was smitten.

Anyone could see that Percival was head over heels for Vivienne.

And Vivienne? Well, she'd always played it cool.

Sure, she might treat Percival a touch differently than others, but just barely.

So, there was a tiny part of him that felt a twinge of injustice for his brother.

But now he felt at peace.

Star Grass and Seven-Poison Flower were as rare as hen's teeth. It was not something one could just pick up at the local apothecary.

When he found out that Percival needed these two ingredients to counteract a poison, he moved heaven and earth, using every contact to no avail.

He didn't know how Vivienne had managed to obtain them, but he knew she must've paid a hefty price.

Perhaps Vivienne was also smitten with Percival; she just wasn't good at showing it, or maybe she hadn't even realized it herself.

With a light touch, he draped a throw blanket over Vivienne before quietly slipping out of the room.

Chapter 149

Percival was stirred awake as the morning light brightly illuminated the room.

The first sight that greeted him was Vivienne. Her eyes were closed, and her lashes were fluttering slightly as she stirred in her sleep. Her eyes were shadowed with fatigue.

It was the first time he had seen Vivienne so up close while she slept. There was a tranquility to her,

one that he had never seen before. It was a rare glimpse of the innocence of a 19-year-old girl.

She had always struck him as a wildflower who was resilient and untamed. She never seemed to tire or falter.

She seemed invincible.

Yet here she was, exhausted from her endeavors for him, asleep by his side with her defenses down.

He was touched beyond words.

“Vivienne.” He whispered, gently rousing her.

Her lashes fluttered, and she slowly opened her eyes at Percival’s soft call.

The first thing she did after waking was to reach out and feel his forehead. Only after confirming that

his fever had subsided did she let out a small sigh of relief.

“You’re no longer poisoned.”

Percival wasn’t completely unconscious while he was out, especially with Leopold by his side.

That chatterbox was as loud as a flock of ducks, constantly babbling about how Vivienne was out there

somewhere, looking for the rare and elusive antidote ingredients.

Even though Percival was no medic, he knew how rare those ingredients were and felt a surge of anxiety while she was away. But he was helpless, trapped in his unconsciousness.

This was why he had spiked a fever.

“Do you want to eat something?” Vivienne asked as she got up. “You’ve slept for a day and a night. I’ll go make you some porridge.”

“I’ll come with you.” Percival quickly got up but swayed due to his weakness.

“Don’t push yourself.” Vivienne steadied him while frowning.

Percival didn’t want to admit he was scared of eating her cooking, fearing it might make him ill again.

So he made an excuse. “I’ve been lying down for too long; my back hurts. I need to move around.”

Seeing his insistence, Vivienne gave in, and they went to the kitchen together. Under Percival’s guidance, she managed to cook some decent porridge.

Just as they were about to eat, Leopold showed up with two takeaway breakfast meals. He was surprised to see them. “Wow, I thought no one here could cook. I brought you guys breakfast so you wouldn’t starve.”

“We can order takeaway ourselves.” Percival looked at the takeaway boxes in Leopold’s hands coldly.

“Alright, alright. I was just trying to help.” Leopold’s eyes were flicking between the two bowls of porridge and Percival and Vivienne. They eventually settled on Vivienne. “Who made this? You?”

“Is there a problem?” Vivienne raised an eyebrow.

“You made this?” Leopold looked skeptical and disgusted. “Can this even be eaten?”

He tried to stop Percival from eating it. “No, no, no, Percival, I know you love your fiancée to the moon and back, and you’d eat poison if she gave it to you. But you’ve just recovered; you shouldn’t torture yourself like this. Eat this instead.”

As he spoke, Leopold tried to take away Percival’s bowl and replace it with the takeaway meal.

“Hands off.” Percival held onto his bowl tightly and tapped Leopold’s hand away with his spoon.

“You’re saying that again?” Vivienne narrowed her eyes. Her cooking skills, under Percival’s guidance, had improved significantly. She didn’t appreciate Leopold’s dismissal.

“Well, if you don’t like what I said, I won’t say it again.” Leopold chuckled, but his meaning was clear.

“What if it’s delicious?” Vivienne asked coldly.

"If it's delicious, I'll eat a pound of salt." Leopold said arrogantly.

"Deal." Vivienne smirked and pushed her untouched bowl of porridge towards Leopold.

Leopold raised an eyebrow and carefully tasted the porridge as if it were poison. His eyes lit up in surprise; he hadn't expected Vivienne's cooking to be this good.

But then he remembered his earlier statement, and his face fell.

"One pound of salt. Don't forget." Vivienne said while looking at Leopold's expression. She already knew the outcome.

She left the table in high spirits, heading to the kitchen to get another bowl of porridge.

"Percival..." Leopold turned to Percival for help with a pained look on his face.

"If you think one pound isn't enough, we can add another." Percival wasn't going to help him.

Leopold sighed heavily and slumped in his chair, glaring at the bowl of porridge in front of him. He decided to continue eating, thinking to himself that he wouldn't let the pound of salt go to waste.

In the kitchen, Vivienne had just finished preparing another bowl of porridge when Draven's call came.

She picked up the phone and heard Draven's serious voice. "Brody escaped."

"Escaped?" Vivienne frowned.

When she had administered the poison, she had calculated the dosage. With Brody's skills, he should have been detained in the special prison by the time he detoxified.

Brody was a twisted man, but he was also stubbornly honorable when it came to medical matters. He wouldn't break his promises.

How could he have escaped?

"We were ambushed while transporting him." Draven explained. "The attackers had heavy firepower.

They seemed more intent on killing Brody than rescuing him. They fired a rocket launcher, blowing up the prison van. We had several casualties. But Brody survived. Someone saw him escape after the explosion."

"Do we know who's behind this?" Vivienne's frown deepened.

"Not yet." Draven's voice was filled with suppressed anger. "If it weren't for our quick-thinking men who spotted the ambush earlier, we would have suffered more than just injuries."

"Keep digging." Vivienne paused before adding, "Tell Brian about Brody. Tell him if he chases him down, all the reward money is his."

"He's already on it." Draven chuckled.

Knowing that Brody and his bounty had taken off, Brian, who loved money as much as life itself, wasted no time grabbing his gear and setting off in pursuit.

Vivienne sighed. Was the Nine Mystics Society broke or something? Why did her younger colleague seem to have dollar signs in his eyes since childhood?

After disconnecting from Draven, Vivienne pondered for a while. The people escorting Brody weren't just from the Nine Mystics Society. There were also individuals from the special department sent by the higher-ups.

Their actions would surely attract attention from the higher-ups. What was the reason that they would risk exposing themselves just to get Brody?

"Vivienne? What's up?" Percival called out to her, noticing she'd been in the kitchen for a while.

"Nothing much, just checking your pantry to see if you've got enough salt for a pound." Vivienne casually placed the porridge on the table, hiding her deep thoughts.

Chapter 150

Leopold's face instantly soured by another degree at the mention of a pound of salt. He quickly diverted

Vivienne's attention. "Did you hear about the incident at N&S Psychiatric Hospital yesterday?"

Percival lifted his gaze, signaling him to continue.

"They say a patient died inside and two escaped." Leopold said with an air of mystery.

"Isn't it common for people to die in N&S Psychiatric Hospital?" Thomas asked.

"This time it's different. When the police arrived, everyone in the hospital was unconscious on the floor."

Leopold said as he continued to eat his breakfast.

"The one who died from poisoning was found at the front door. When they asked the people in the hospital what had happened, not a single person could recall last night's events."

"What about the two who escaped?" Percival, more interested in the escapees than the deceased, asked.

"They haven't been found yet." Leopold shook his head. "So the police will be busy for a while. Security in the city will also be tightened."

Vivienne remained silent. The two escaped mental patients were clearly referring to Brody and Brian.

Leopold suddenly recalled as he slapped the table and addressed Percival. "Arabella, who was thrown in there, was also rescued by the police."

Percival was startled, only then remembering that he had instructed Leopold to have Arabella admitted to N&S Psychiatric Hospital. "What happened to her?"

"She's in a pretty bad state." Leopold spoke while glancing at Vivienne, who was quietly eating. After all, Percival had done this to win Vivienne's favor, so he had to make Arabella's situation sound as dire as possible.

And so he exaggerated. "When she was rescued, she was beaten beyond recognition. Not only was she covered in bruises, but she also had two holes in her stomach. Her intestines were almost exposed. When she woke up, she was raving mad, constantly claiming that there was a bomb in her belly."

"Oh, and one of her legs was also amputated."

"Are you sure the wounds on her abdomen were big enough to expose her intestines?" Vivienne grew more skeptical as she listened. "And her leg... It was just broken, right? Not amputated."

It couldn't be that after she left, Draven and the others decided to take revenge on Arabella again?

She didn't think this was something Draven would do.

"How do you know?" Now it was Leopold's turn to look at Vivienne in confusion.

The incident at N&S Psychiatric Hospital was classified, so no news had been released yet. Even he only knew about it through internal channels.

Vivienne lowered her eyelids, quietly finishing her breakfast.

The small hole in Arabella's abdomen was her doing. How could she not know?

"What's being done with her now?" Percival asked as he shot a meaningful glance at Vivienne.

"She's been taken to the hospital." Leopold chuckled. "She ran into N&S Psychiatric Hospital herself, so we're not implicated. Besides, I think she's almost a mental patient herself now."

At the city hospital, Arabella was indeed almost a mental patient, or at least the police thought so.

No matter how much she insisted that two lunatics had implanted two bombs in her body for a bet while

she was in N&S Psychiatric Hospital, the police didn't believe her.

That was because they found no trace of the miniature bomb or the laparoscopic surgery equipment she mentioned in the hospital.

As for her claims of being tortured by patients at N&S Psychiatric Hospital, the police couldn't do

anything about it. After all, they were mental patients and not legally accountable for their actions.

When Beatrice heard about this, she was still lying in her hospital bed, not yet discharged.

All the paperwork was handled by Michael.

The police visited Beatrice's room once. After hearing the details, she could only ask the police to ensure the confidentiality of Arabella's identity.

Otherwise, if word got out about her ordeal at N&S Psychiatric Hospital, she wouldn't be able to show her dignity in Havenwood.

After the police left, Beatrice asked Michael and Joseph in annoyance, "Why didn't you answer the phone when Arabella called you that day?"

"Mom, I was with you all day. When I got back, I went straight to bed." Joseph replied in a low voice.

"I figured she wasn't coming to take care of you, so she couldn't be in any trouble. I didn't bother picking up." Michael retorted with a cold laugh.

"Besides, she said she was going to confront the man in black but ended up in N&S Psychiatric Hospital. Even if I had picked up the phone that day, I wouldn't have been able to rescue her."

What a joke!

N&S Psychiatric Hospital was no ordinary place. Just looking at how Arabella, a delicate young girl, was tortured into a ghastly state after just one day inside, one could imagine how terrifying the patients in there were.

Risking his life to save someone? No!

Moreover, Arabella was just a foster daughter of the Hawthorn family. Even if she were his own biological daughter, he would have to weigh the pros and cons of saving her.

"Mom, what are we going to do now?" Michael asked cautiously, "With Arabella in this state and the man in black not showing any concern, it's clear that we've been abandoned."

His tone held a trace of resentment as he continued, "You listened to him and framed our brother, but in

the end, not only did we ruin our reputation, but we also severed ties with our brother completely. On top of that, the promises he made to us have all fallen through."

"Are you blaming me?!" Beatrice glared at Michael in anger.

Michael didn't dare voice his thoughts, but his expression said it all.

"I've been putting everything on the line, working my tail off for our family, and all you guys do is

complain!" Beatrice scoffed. "But don't worry; as long as I'm still alive, the Hawthorns won't hit a dead end."

"Mom, do you have a plan?" Michael's eyes lit up instantly.

Joseph also looked up at Beatrice, his face full of anticipation.

"I didn't want to resort to this, because doing so would mean bowing down to the folks at Rivenwood."

Beatrice chuckled scornfully. "But we're at our wit's end now. We have no choice but to seek their aid."

Michael and Joseph were stunned. They had branched off from the Brooks family in Rivenwood, and the split, as far as they knew, had been anything but amicable. The two families have been at odds ever since.

Now, Beatrice was suggesting they should seek help from the Brooks family. They couldn't help but be taken aback.

"Have you two visited Arabella yet?" Beatrice asked again.

Michael and Joseph exchanged glances, but neither of them said a word.

"Fools! Arabella will be of great importance to us in the future!" Beatrice glanced at her two sons with a

stern expression. "Help me up. Let's go see Arabella!"