

Million-Dollar 161

Chapter 161

Percival's eyes fluttered open to the soft light of dawn filtering in from the balcony.

Propping himself up on his elbows, he saw Vivienne seated in front of the floor-to-ceiling glass door,

engrossed in the minicomputer in her hands.

The morning sun draped her in a gentle halo, making her seem ethereal.

She had been staring at the name 'Wolf' on the screen for a long while before her gaze shifted towards

Percival, lying on the bed with an inscrutable expression in her eyes.

Matthew had once told her that the code-name of the new team leader who had taken over her

mother's team after her mother's demise was Wolf.

Could it be that Percival was Wolf?

He was her mother's colleague?

"What's wrong, Vivienne?" Percival asked as his handsome face bathed in the warm morning light and

a soft smile played on his lips.

Vivienne paused for a moment before turning the tiny computer screen towards him. "Who are you,

really?"

The sight of the black interface and the striking red 'Wolf' on the screen didn't surprise Percival.

He had known from the start that Vivienne wasn't living in his home to take care of his injuries or to court him. She was here to investigate him.

So, he had been waiting for her to unravel the truth herself.

His room was never locked at night, and he had deliberately changed his phone passcode to her birthday. He was aware of her snooping around but pretended not to notice.

He was sure of her identity now. He had no secrets from her.

"Frost."

Vivienne stiffened. The playful smile faded from her face, replaced by a deadly seriousness. "Who are you?"

'Frost' was her nickname.

Only her mother used to call her that.

No one knew about this nickname, not even Dorian.

It was the name she had taken after leaving the Hawthorn family when her mother and she were being

pursued.

She had watched helplessly as her mother fought off their attackers, and she had wanted nothing more than to tear them apart.

But her mother told her that violence wasn't always the solution and that it was crucial to remain calm to come up with a better plan. They were up against a formidable opponent, and they needed to keep their heads cool.

Vivienne was prone to acting impulsively, so to remind herself to stay calm, she had asked her mother to call her 'Frost.'.

Even to this day, her calm and composed demeanor was a result of constantly reminding herself of that nickname.

But how did Percival know about it?

For a moment, the usually composed Vivienne felt a surge of murderous intent.

Percival felt the chill radiating off her. He pursed his lips and, after a long while, managed to croak out,

"Don't you remember me?"

Vivienne frowned as her brows knitted together in thought.

She scrutinized Percival from head to toe and back again.

She was absolutely certain that she had never met him before their recent encounter.

"I want an explanation." She demanded with her voice firm.

Percival gently patted her head, his voice soft and soothing. "Frost, I'll buy you a strawberry cake every year."

Vivienne's eyes lit up. Her earlier cold demeanor vanished instantly as her voice went higher than usual. "Mr. Wolf? Is that you?"

Percival choked on his own saliva, nearly drowning himself.

Mr. Wolf?

That was a name from a long time ago.

Up until now, only she had ever called him that.

And the reason why?

Well, when he first met her, she was only two, and he was already twelve.

He was a full decade older than her.

And after numerous failed attempts by her mother to get her to call him 'brother,' she brazenly declared that someone ten years older shouldn't be referred to as 'brother.'

So, Mr. Wolf, it was. Since she always said that he was a wolf, why not call him Mr. Wolf?

And that was how he had never mentioned his real name to her.

But she had used that nickname for only a year.

He later adopted the code-name 'Wolf' in memory of that time.

"Frost, I thought you had forgotten about me." Percival murmured, breaking away from his thoughts.

Vivienne flashed a genuine smile, the likes of which she hadn't sported in a long time. "I could never forget. I've always remembered."

This was the heartwarming feeling of meeting a long-lost relative. A reminder that she still had family in the world, and through him, she could still feel her mother's presence.

Percival was different from Dorian.

Dorian loved her mother, but he had a family of his own now, and he didn't remind Vivienne of their mother as much.

But Percival...

She was only two when she met him, but she had an unusually good memory and remembered everyone who had ever been a part of her life.

Mr. Wolf was the kindest person to her, after her mother.

He would spoil her just like her mother did. He fulfilled all her whims and fancies, tolerating her tantrums and mood swings.

She could be her unguarded self around them.

But she hadn't seen Mr. Wolf since she turned three.

It had been so long that he had changed completely, and she hadn't recognized him at all.

Percival's heart melted at the sight of her smile. He ruffled her hair and promised, "I'll bake you a strawberry cake tomorrow. I owe you for all these years. I'll make it up to you."

"Okay." Vivienne agreed, her smile still in place.

There was a moment of silence between them.

Vivienne finally broke the silence. "Mr. Wolf, why were you investigating my mother? How did you get her pendant? Lark was her code-name."

"Lark was my mentor." Percival replied, his eyes full of adoration as he ruffled her hair.

"Mentor?" Vivienne was taken aback.

She hadn't known that Percival was her mother's student. She had thought he was just a friend.

"Yeah." Percival said as he pulled Vivienne closer to sit down with him. "When I heard that you guys were in trouble, I rushed to your aid, but I was too late."

Ten years ago, he had been promoted to a certain team. He, the young heir of the Ellington family was given a clandestine task to investigate Lark's crew and retrieve a certain elixir for the nation.

Lark wore many hats, including being the leader of a unique team. And the person who mentored

Percival was a woman named Hannah, who was also Lark.

That was why it took him a while to realize that Vivienne, who'd been around him for a long time, was Hannah's daughter.

After listening to Percival, Vivienne fell silent. "So, you want the elixir?"

"Yes." Percival lifted his gaze, looking at her earnestly. "Vivienne, this elixir is of great importance to the nation. I must take it."

He didn't need to spell it out. Vivienne understood.

She knew he was aware that she had the elixir.

Vivienne didn't say anything.

Percival didn't rush her either.

After a while, Vivienne began. "My mother told me there were two elixirs, one with me and one with the

Hawthorn family. I haven't been able to find the one with the Hawthorns, and Mr. Hawthorn isn't willing to reveal anything."

She paused. "But I think my mother lied to me. There should be at least five elixirs."

Percival nodded. "Right! The mother of that girl at Cloudcrest High School has one, too."

Vivienne pressed her lips together. "I can hand over the elixir, but I want to meet the former colleague of my mother's team. I want to know about my mother's past."

"No problem."

Percival fell silent for a moment before looking at Vivienne. "Do you know her real name?"

Lark was a mystery to everyone.

She could be Lark from some team.

She could be his mentor, Hannah.

Or Dorian's ex-wife, Evelyn.

To date, no one knew her real name.

"Karen."

Chapter 162

Karen.

Percival's icy gaze tightened at the sound of the name, as if he had heard it somewhere before.

With a comforting look in his eyes, Percival gazed at Vivienne.

"Thank goodness."

"Thank goodness."

Vivienne mirrored his smile, grateful that they were allies instead of enemies.

The question that had been lingering in her mind was finally answered, and Vivienne felt relieved that

she didn't have to cross swords with Percival.

The summer morning sun was perfect; a few birds landed on the balcony and chirped merrily.

"Percival, we can call off our engagement now." Vivienne looked at Percival, her face a picture of calm.

Percival's gentle expression instantly froze. The joy he was just feeling was shattered. "Why?"

Did she want to break off their engagement?

He wouldn't allow it.

"I got engaged to you to investigate my mother's necklace." Vivienne explained, her voice devoid of emotion. "I never intended to get married."

"I disagree." Percival grabbed her hand, a hint of anger in his voice.

Vivienne frowned slightly, waiting for him to continue.

"Do you know why your mother wanted to entrust this necklace to me before she died?" Percival went on. "Because it's a token of our engagement. It's proof that your mother entrusted you to me, so I won't agree to calling off our engagement."

"So you're refusing because of my mother's request?" Vivienne's frown deepened.

"No, it's because I like you, and I want to protect you for the rest of my life." Percival took out the necklace and wore it around his neck in front of Vivienne, gently stroking the smooth surface of the pendant. "This is proof that you belong to me."

Vivienne was taken aback, and Percival's face suddenly approached hers. He leaned down for a kiss

that was both domineering and tender.

Vivienne was stunned. The kiss had come unexpectedly.

But it seemed like she rather liked the feeling of kissing him.

She wrapped her arms around Percival's neck and kissed him back.

"Then... no takebacks."

Upon receiving her response, Percival deepened the kiss.

The morning sun streamed in, casting their entwined shadows on the light gray tiles of the bedroom.

They were inseparable and reluctant to part.

...

The next day, at Cloudcrest High School.

Since the last physical education class for Class Eighteen was scheduled for that afternoon, Percival

had accompanied Vivienne to school.

With less than half a month left before the college entrance test, the remaining study plans had been

well arranged and wouldn't change much. Apart from supervising studies, Vivienne had no other

business in school.

While Percival was in physical education class, she had planned to go to the street outside the school to buy a strawberry cake. However, as she passed by the gymnasium, she heard a scream.

With her keen hearing, she immediately recognized it as Coral's voice, so she stopped and went to take a look.

Coral was sitting on the ground, covering her eyes. There was a basketball lying next to her; clearly, she had been hit hard.

The rest of Class Eighteen were all around her. Faye was checking her injury with concern. "How is it? Did it hurt your eyes?"

Coral shook her head and rubbed her eyes.

Faye let out a sigh of relief, but after seeing the large bruise on Coral's left eye, she was still furious.

"Mr. Tristan, you've gone too far!" Charlotte, always quick to anger, had already jumped up, pointing at

Tristan, who was not far away. "As a teacher, you deliberately hit her with a basketball!"

Vivienne had already found out about Tristan's sudden appointment by the board of directors as a substitute physical education teacher for Class One when she came to school that day.

Lysander was against Tristan teaching, even though he was just a physical education teacher and wouldn't affect students' studies much. But Tristan had openly hit Coral in school just two days ago; such a person was not fit to be a teacher.

There were many people on the board of directors of Cloudcrest High School, all of them of high status.

Tristan was the adopted son of the Brooks family, and although the Brooks family was no match for the Ellington family, it was still easy for them to appoint someone as a teacher at Cloudcrest High School.

Even if Lysander didn't want to agree, he had to.

Tristan looked at Charlotte shamelessly. "When did you see me doing it on purpose?"

He casually shook his hand and said, "I just slipped."

"You!" Charlotte, knowing about the conflict between Arabella and Coral two days ago, which led to

Coral's transfer to Class Eighteen, was so angry at Tristan's blatant lie that she was speechless.

Such a morally corrupt person had the audacity to be a teacher?

She was definitely going to get her family to file a complaint with the school.

"Better take her to the medical room quickly." Tristan sneered. "Next time you see me, take a detour, so

I don't accidentally slip and hurt you."

Before he could finish his sentence, two basketballs suddenly flew at him from two directions, hitting him squarely in the face. The impact made him stumble back and see stars.

"Sorry, slipped."

"Sorry, slipped."

Two distinctly different voices echoed simultaneously.

"Ms. Vivienne!"

"Mr. Ellington!"

The students of Class Eighteen looked at Percival and Vivienne in surprise and delight.

After seeing Percival, Tristan's face turned red with anger, and he roared, "Percival, you again!"

"What's wrong?" Percival stared coldly at Tristan. "Afraid I'll bully you like you bullied my student, huh?"

Percival had planned to hit the basketball court today. He brought Logan and Oberon Harper to the equipment room to grab a basket full of basketballs. But when he returned, he was met with this situation.

"It was an accident, I swear!" Tristan muttered, clutching the spot where the basketball had smacked

him as he gritted his teeth in anger. "You guys hit back too!"

His initial impulse was to rush at Percival and let his fists do the talking, but the reminder of Percival's bodyguards, likely lurking nearby, held him back.

Percival stood tall with his hands jammed into his jeans pockets. His handsome face was void of any expression. "Apologize."

"Hmph!" Tristan snorted while casting a hateful glance at Percival. He knew a head-on confrontation would not work, but he wasn't about to back down and apologize either.

"Why don't we settle it like this?" Arabella, who had been spectating, couldn't resist stepping in when she saw the stalemate. "How about Tristan leads our class in a basketball match against Class Eighteen?"

A good number of boys from Class One had been part of the school's basketball team before they had to quit due to exam preparations. They had won numerous prizes at city, provincial, and even national high school basketball championships. Arabella knew their skills were top-notch.

As for Class Eighteen, apart from Logan and Oberon, there weren't many good basketball players. It

was clear who had the upper hand.

"If our class loses, then Tristan will apologize to Coral. If we win..." Arabella paused, her meaning clear,

but Tristan cut in, pointing at Percival and Vivienne. "If we win, then the two of you will kneel and

apologize to me in front of the whole school."

"Heh." Percival chuckled.

When did he ever need to win a game to get someone's apology?

He pulled his hands from his pockets and started walking towards Tristan.

Vivienne quickly intercepted him. "This is a school!"

If this weren't a school, she wouldn't mind teaching Tristan a lesson in her own way.

But, having seen the darker side of life, she didn't want the students to experience too much of it.

Percival met her gaze, and his lips curled into a smirk. "Alright, we'll do it Vivienne's way."

He shifted his gaze to Tristan, his piercing glance and icy tone chilling the air. "If I lose, I'll kneel and

apologize to you. If you lose, you kneel to Coral."

"Deal!"

Chapter 163

Tristan and Arabella shared a knowing glance before they turned on their heels and strolled back to

their cluster of classmates, the boys who'd chosen to participate in the game.

However, the mood in Class Eighteen was quite somber.

Logan frowned as he looked at the boys in his class, frustration evident in his voice. "Guys, are you really that scared? We're a class of over twenty boys, and only Oberon and I have the guts to step up?"

Counting Percival, they were still short of two players.

"Well... we're afraid of losing..." A boy mumbled weakly. "We aren't exactly known for our skills in basketball. If we lose, Mr. Ellington and Ms. Vivienne would have to kneel down to that jerk in public."

After he finished speaking, he shot nervous glances at Percival and Vivienne.

"We can't just lose without even trying!" Oberon was nearly livid with the cowardice displayed by his classmates.

Where had the spirit of Class Eighteen gone?

But the boys just looked at each other, still hesitant to step forward.

"Fine, I'll do it."

The students of Class Eighteen turned to look in surprise as a girl with short hair and a rather

unremarkable appearance stepped forward. She was wearing a loose-fitting sports uniform and sporting silver-rimmed glasses. She addressed Percival amid the surprised stares of her classmates.

"Mr. Ellington, can girls play too?"

"Do you know how to play basketball?" Percival asked, eyeing her doubtfully.

Vivienne gave the girl a once-over. She remembered her name was Anna. An average-looking girl with middling grades. Anna was practically invisible in Class Eighteen.

The only thing that made her stand out was her height. She was at least 5'8" and was always seated at the back of the class, often tucked away in the shadows whenever Vivienne visited.

Vivienne hardly had any impression of her.

So when Anna stepped forward, it took everyone by surprise. The entire class looked at her with doubtful eyes, questioning whether she could actually play basketball.

Instead of responding, Anna picked up a basketball from the nearby basket and dribbled it all the way to the three-point line. She jumped up, took a shot, and scored. All in one smooth motion.

The basketball swished through the net, causing a stir among the students of Class Eighteen, who all looked at Anna in amazement.

"Is that okay?" Anna asked Percival.

"You're great." Percival nodded in approval, having noticed that Anna's basketball skills were top-notch.

"We're still missing one more person though." Logan pointed out, his expression a mix of awe and frustration as he glared at the boys of Class Eighteen. "Are you guys really going to let a girl show you up?"

The boys of Class Eighteen remained silent.

"Guess I'll have to do it then." Vivienne said with her hands tucked into her pockets.

Everyone turned to look at her in surprise.

"Ms. Vivienne, are you sure you can handle it?" Oberon looked at her skeptically, the same doubt he had for Anna reflected in his gaze.

Vivienne picked up a basketball and spun it on her finger, cocking her head to look at Oberon. "You don't think I can?"

For some reason, even though Vivienne was smiling, Oberon saw a glint of challenge in her eyes.

"No, no, that's not what I meant." He quickly waved his hands, not daring to voice any objections.

"So, Ms. Vivienne, what position will you play?" Logan asked cautiously.

"How about point guard?" Vivienne suggested with a smile.

A point guard was the organizer of the team's offense. They didn't need to be particularly tall, but they

did need to have excellent control over the game and timing of passes. It was a critical position.

Logan and Oberon were skeptical but didn't voice their doubts. Anna seemed indifferent.

Percival, being fond of Vivienne, wouldn't have objected even if she wanted to play center and compete for rebounds.

So they decided on the positions. Percival was the small forward, Logan was the power forward,

Oberon was the center, Anna was the shooting guard, and Vivienne was the point guard, forming an unconventional team.

When Tristan from Class One walked onto the court with his four-man team and saw the lineup of Class Eighteen, they all looked taken aback.

"Percival, are all the boys in your class a bunch of wimps?" Tristan couldn't help but scoff. "You even have two girls on your team? And isn't Vivienne a teacher? Is that even allowed?"

"Ms. Vivienne is our homeroom teacher, so she can definitely represent us." Logan retorted defiantly.

"We just thought it would be too easy to beat you guys, so we put two girls on our team to give you a fighting chance."

"Sure, keep talking tough." Tristan sneered, then turned to his own team. "If you guys lose to a team with two girls, don't ever tell anyone you know how to play basketball."

His teammates exchanged glances. Their competitive spirits were ignited.

Truth be told, they had all seen Tristan deliberately injure Coral. They were already displeased with this new PE teacher who had suddenly appeared. Initially, they thought of throwing the game in Class Eighteen's favor.

But now, after what Tristan had said, how could they lose dignity by losing to Class Eighteen? After all, they genuinely loved basketball.

The game quickly began. A senior PE teacher who happened to be around was serving as the referee to ensure fairness.

The whistle blew, signaling the start of the game.

Percival jumped for the ball and successfully batted it to his team's side before Tristan could.

The students from Class One rushed to intercept, but Vivienne had already effortlessly scooped up the ball.

Logan and Oberon immediately rushed back to defend.

Vivienne looked at the five eager members of Class One before her, gripping the basketball in her right hand. A playful smile adorned her face as she raised a single finger, signaling to her four teammates.

"Let's score the first basket."

No sooner had the words left her mouth than she moved like the wind. A fake charge forward had her opponents scrambling.

By the time they reacted, she had spun around them, dribbling the ball past three of them.

As she bolted past the mid-court, Tristan came forward to intercept her. However, with a swift flick of her wrist, she tossed the ball into the air.

"Darn it!" Tristan cursed and spun around.

The basketball was already in Percival's hands. He weaved around the boys of Class One, moving the ball towards the basket. With three swift steps and a leap, the ball dropped into the net.

Two points for their team.

Chapter 164

Percival scored a basket, and a cheer erupted from the seniors on the sidelines.

Tristan gritted his teeth in frustration. He glanced at Vivienne and Anna as a cold glint appeared in his eyes before whispering something to the other four players on his team.

The four boys hesitated, but under Tristan's pressure, they had no choice but to agree.

From then on, Tristan and his crew started to single out Vivienne and Anna, taking advantage of their petite frames and deliberately body-checking them.

Tristan, in particular, seemed to enjoy humiliating Vivienne. Instead of passing to his teammates, he made a point of aiming the ball at her face.

"That's low!" Faye, who was cheering from the sidelines, was livid. Her scar had long since healed, thanks to Vivienne.

And ever since, she had been much happier. This was the first time she had been angry since her recovery.

"Have you no shame?" Charlotte shouted at Class One team. "Picking on girls! What a display of 'strength'!"

Class One looked embarrassed. They, too, thought Tristan's actions were distasteful.

Arabella, however, scoffed and said, "The court is a battlefield. You aim for your opponent's weakness.

As long as it's within the rules, it's fair game. It's just a strategy."

She did have a point, and Class Eighteen was left speechless.

"Look at Ms. Vivienne!" Faye suddenly shouted excitedly.

On the court, Vivienne easily dodged her opponents, no matter how hard they targeted her.

She cast a glance at Tristan, effortlessly caught the ball, and passed it to Percival.

She raised an eyebrow and spoke softly, "Percival, they are bullying me. Will you teach them a lesson?"

Ah, the perks of having a fiancé. She had someone to fight her battles.

Percival's face darkened the moment Tristan began targeting Vivienne.

"Sure, I'll teach them some manners!"

If they weren't in school, he wouldn't mind teaching Tristan a lesson his way.

But no matter.

He would do it the civilized way.

Percival took the ball and easily dribbled past his opponents. He scored layups, dunked, and hit three-pointers.

In no time, he was the center of attention, scoring twenty points.

Each time he scored, Class Eighteen cheered. Even the Class One girls couldn't help but scream in excitement for him.

Arabella watched Percival's graceful figure on the court, filled with greed and resentment. He was supposed to be hers; she was the one who gave him up to Vivienne.

During half-time, Class Eighteen was on cloud nine, looking at Class One with contempt.

The four boys from the Class One complained to Tristan. "Coach, if you didn't want to win, you should have just said so. Was it necessary to target Vivienne and throw the ball at her?"

"Exactly! Not only is Ms. Vivienne unscathed, she even passed all the balls to Mr. Ellington, and we didn't score a single point!"

"Damn! We shot ourselves in the foot!"

Class One was silent. Tristan and his team's actions were disgraceful, and they hadn't scored a single

point. On the other hand, Class Eighteen, with two girls on the team, were leading by twenty points.

“How can you blame Tristan?” Arabella came to Tristan’s defense. “Targeting Vivienne, a girl, was a smart strategy. Who knew that you four couldn’t even...”

She didn’t finish her sentence, but her point was clear. The blame lay with the four boys, who couldn't even guard one girl.

“So, it's our fault that Coach Tristan deliberately threw the ball at Ms. Vivienne instead of his teammates, allowing the other team to score?”

The four boys looked unhappy.

“Shut up!” Tristan glared at them, and they fell silent. They were intimidated by his malicious gaze.

He looked at the members of Class Eighteen, who were cheering happily. Vivienne and Percival were the center of attention. He had underestimated Vivienne and Anna.

He had thought they would be the weak links, but Vivienne's ball control and Anna's scoring abilities were impressive.

“We'll play normally in the second half. We can win.” Tristan commanded.

The boys rolled their eyes but didn't say anything else.

In the second half, Tristan and his team stopped targeting Vivienne and Anna. They finally had some scoring opportunities, but Percival and Vivienne's skills were too formidable, and the score gap remained wide.

Halfway through the second half, the score gap had widened to sixty points.

Tristan's eyes flashed with malice. He deliberately fouled and injured Oberon while fighting for a rebound. Oberon fell to the ground, clutching his ankle and crying out in pain.

"My foot!"

"Oberon!" Members of Class Eighteen rushed over in a panic. Vivienne hurried over to check on Oberon.

His ankle was swollen. It was a serious sprain.

"Tristan, you have no shame!" Charlotte was so angry that she addressed Tristan by his first name, omitting the customary 'Mr.'

"It was an accident." Tristan replied nonchalantly, his attitude brazen.

Vivienne's face was set in a stern mask as she pressed gently against Oberon's ankle. After she

adjusted his sprained bone into place, the pain seemed to lessen, but there was no way he could play anymore.

This left her team one player short.

"Maybe I should sit this one out. You guys can continue 4V4." A player from Tristan's team suggested.

He'd had enough of Tristan's dirty moves, especially the one he'd just pulled. He was beginning to regret even showing up for this game.

Tristan glared at the player. "If you want to quit, fine. But you're running a hundred laps around the field."

A hundred laps? That was practically suicide.

The player paled, about to argue, when Vivienne stood up. "Four people are enough!"

"You're joking!" Tristan was angered by her defiant posture, and his eyes filled with even more malice.

The second half continued.

Despite being one player short, Vivienne and Percival played with an aggressive edge.

They were specifically targeting Tristan. The moment the ball was in his hands, Percival would swoop in and steal it with unexpected tactics.

In the remaining ten minutes, no one on Tristan's team could hold onto the ball for more than five seconds.

As the end of the match approached, Tristan's face grew darker and more menacing. With only fifty seconds left on the clock, his team hadn't scored a single point.

He couldn't accept this!

Logan managed to get hold of the ball, and Tristan, desperate, tried to trip him. Ignoring the referee's whistle for a foul, he raced with the ball towards the basket, ready to dunk.

No one saw how Percival appeared out of nowhere under the basket. He jumped up, reaching higher than Tristan, and blocked the shot.

Taken aback, Tristan turned around just in time to see Vivienne with the ball. He shouted, "Defense!"

As the four guys on his team charged towards her, Vivienne smoothly tossed the ball behind her to Percival.

Standing outside the three-point line, Percival leaped backward and shot.

Team Eighteen won by a staggering seventy-three points!

Chapter 165

Class Eighteen burst into cheers, but the students from Class One didn't hang their heads in defeat.

They just felt utterly embarrassed, especially the four boys who had participated in the game.

Tristan was completely livid, but what really stung was seeing Arabella run towards Percival, who was

lounging on a bench with a bottle of water in her hand. "Percival, you must be tired after playing so

long. Have a drink. My sister really neglected you."

Vivienne looked at Arabella, her eyes filled with amusement.

Percival didn't even bat an eye. With a casual flick of his foot, he kicked a basketball lying at his feet

towards Arabella.

Arabella was suddenly tripped by the basketball and fell heavily to the ground, spilling the water all over

herself.

"Arabella!" Tristan rushed over to help her up.

"Why do you always treat me like this?" Arabella asked Percival, clearly discontented.

"Just get rid of that ball. It's filthy." Percival said indifferently to Logan.

Logan immediately instructed his classmates to toss the ball into the trash, even going so far as to

wrap it in a plastic bag in front of Arabella, clearly indicating that they too found it disgusting.

"Percival, you're going too far!" Tristan was about to defend Arabella.

"Why don't you start by apologizing to Coral and Oberon?!" Charlotte said, pointing at Tristan.

"Right! Apologize!" Class Eighteen was united in their anger. Their last gym class had been spoiled by two injuries, both caused by Tristan.

"I won't accept this!" Tristan refused to back down. "My team was weak. But I didn't lose!"

The four boys from Class One turned green. Tristan didn't care; he was too busy pointing at Percival and challenging him. "Let's have a one-on-one. Whoever scores more wins!"

Percival seemed to regard him as a clown.

"You're scared?" Tristan's eyes were bloodshot with madness. He had been humiliated too many times by Percival and Vivienne, and he was on the brink of losing it.

"Mr. Ellington, play him! Knock his teeth out! Let's see if he dares talk big afterwards!" The students of Class Eighteen, outraged at Tristan's arrogance, were egging Percival on.

Percival casually fixed his slightly ruffled shirt, then looked up and smirked. His smile was cold and shallow. "Let's play, then."

The appetizer was over.

It was time for the main course.

"Rock, paper, scissors to decide who goes first, or toss-up?" Tristan asked.

Percival tossed the ball to Tristan. "No need. You start."

Tristan caught the ball, feeling a bit embarrassed. According to the rules he had learned from his years

with the Brooks family, winning was all that mattered, regardless of the means or the lack of honor.

However, he didn't know that his nightmare was just beginning.

He tried to break through Percival's defense.

But he didn't even see how Percival made his move. Before he could react, the ball was in Percival's

hands, and then it hit him straight in the face.

"Ah!" Tristan yelled and covered his face. "Percival, are you playing the player or the ball?"

"Both!" Percival replied indifferently, not bothering to hide his disdain for Tristan.

"Retreat?" Percival threw the ball back to him, his aura leaving no room for refusal. "It's too late! You

have to play!"

Tristan was furious.

He looked at Percival, his eyes blazing with intense anger. Today, he was determined to make Percival kneel before him.

He continued his attacks, but just like before, he couldn't even see Percival's shadow before the ball was taken away. Then it hit him in the nose.

For some reason, even though Percival seemed to simply toss the ball, the force was tremendous.

Tristan felt like his nose was about to break.

After a dozen rounds, Tristan was almost falling apart. Percival didn't even bother to spare him a glance. "Continue!"

"You... played... dirty!" Tristan gritted his teeth, enduring the pain all over his body. "I'll sue you for intentional injury! I need a medical examination!"

Percival kicked Tristan's remaining leg, and he fell to his knees. "Do you surrender?"

Tristan was in so much pain that he almost fainted. He had nothing to say.

"Surrender?" Percival threw the ball at him, his tone commanding. "Get up and play!"

Tristan was furious.

He glared at Percival with eyes filled with fire. "I won't let you get away with this!"

Percival stepped on his leg, adding a bit more pressure. "Surrender?"

Crack!

It was the sound of his bone breaking.

"Ah!" Tristan held his leg, howling in pain. "My leg!"

"Tristan!" Arabella was startled and rushed over. "What happened?"

As soon as she came over, Percival kicked Tristan over and stepped on his foot. "Last chance.

Surrender?"

"I surrender! I surrender!" Tristan was in so much pain that he was about to pass out. He didn't want to surrender, but he had no choice.

Percival was a devil. If he didn't surrender, he would have his leg truly broken.

Percival stepped off him, glanced at him indifferently, and said, "Kneel! Apologize!"

With no other choice, Tristan knelt on the ground. "I'm sorry. I was wrong."

"Who are you apologizing to?" Percival asked.

"I'm sorry, Coral. I'm sorry, Vivienne. I shouldn't have hit you with the ball."

Coral and Oberon were rushed to the medical wing, and Percival addressed the students of Class

Eighteen. "Capture this on video for Coral and Oberon."

"Sure thing!"

The students of Class Eighteen excitedly pulled out their smartphones.

After the video was taken, Tristan heaved a sigh of relief and tried to stand, only for Percival to hurl the basketball at him again. The impact left Tristan reeling, and he collapsed, unconscious.

"Tristan!" Arabella screamed and rushed in. Instead of confronting Percival, she turned to Vivienne.

"Sis, you've gone too far. My dad won't let this slide!"

Vivienne barely suppressed a laugh at what she considered a ridiculous threat. Without even a glance at Arabella, she and Percival led the students of Class Eighteen out.

Class One's students had lost dignity that day. Nobody stood up for Tristan. They all followed Class Eighteen, leaving the basketball court empty except for the unconscious Tristan and the resentful Arabella.

The news of Tristan's injury spread like wildfire, prompting a flurry of complaints from parents. The

board had no choice but to agree to Lysander expelling him.

Even without the expulsion, Tristan wouldn't have been able to attend school, as his last match with

Percival had left him bedridden.

He demanded a medical examination, and Arabella arranged it, but it turned up nothing.

Tristan couldn't comprehend why the parts of his body that Percival had hit hurt so much and the

hospital couldn't detect any injuries.

Only Vivienne knew the answer. Percival had used a secret technique learned from her mother,

something like a hidden force strike.

On the surface, his skin and muscles showed no sign of injury, but the strike had damaged his nerves.

The X-rays didn't show anything immediately. It would take at least two weeks for the microfractures in

the bones to gradually emerge. If not treated promptly, Tristan could be permanently disabled.

Chapter 166

At the Brooks family's mansion.

Scott had just hung up the phone with Baron, his expression anything but pleasant.

"Did Richard tattle to your father again?" Judith asked, rubbing her temples in frustration.

"Yeah." Scott massaged his temples, his face a picture of discomfort.

"What on earth was Tristan thinking?" Timothy boomed. "He was supposed to keep an eye on Arabella, not join in her trouble-making activity! Fighting with other students and getting himself half paralyzed? Is he crazy?"

"Big bro, why are you even bothering to find a top-notch doctor for him? I say let him stay paralyzed for life; it'll save us the trouble once he's healed."

Scott sipped his coffee as his eyes narrowed. Years of navigating the corporate world had given him an aura of authority, even when seated.

Tristan was a boy Karen had saved years ago, and Scott had always had a soft spot for him because of it. Besides, Tristan was exceptionally capable and had made countless contributions to the Brooks family.

When news of Tristan's severe injury reached Rivenwood, Scott immediately sent people to find a doctor for Tristan, despite the embarrassing circumstances that led to his injury.

However, after consulting several renowned doctors in Havenwood, all seemed hopeless. As a last resort, Scott posted a reward on the Dark Web and even tried to contact the famous Specter Healer

through his connections.

"That's enough." Judith intervened. "If you want to blame someone, blame Tristan. What's the point in venting at your brother?"

"Grandma." Ashley, sitting next to Melissa, spun her eyes and asked with malicious intent, "So, are we still going to hold Arabella's reunion party?"

Judith hesitated. Arabella had been back for a month now, and by all accounts, they should have held the reunion party by now, inviting all the major families in Rivenwood for a grand celebration.

But considering the trouble Arabella had caused, Judith was hesitant. After a moment's thought, she said, "We'll have it, of course. Since she's in Havenwood, let's hold it there."

Ashley snickered to herself. If Arabella's reunion party wasn't held in Rivenwood, it would certainly raise questions about the legitimacy of her reunion among the other families.

...

Havenwood.

At the same time that Vivienne received a request from the Brooks family to treat Tristan's injuries,

Dorian also received an invitation from them to attend Arabella's reunion party.

Cordelia wasn't keen on going. They had already had a fallout with Arabella. What was the point of attending her party?

"Baron and Scott personally called me." Dorian scratched his head, looking at the invitation card. "I owe them both a lot. It would be rude not to go."

During their time with the Brooks family, Baron and Scott treated Dorian very well. He was not one to forget past favors.

"I'll go alone. You can say you were busy."

"Have you forgotten how Arabella falsely accused you before?" Cordelia's face darkened. "What will people say if you go to the party?"

Even now, she still heard whispers when she dropped Thaddeus off at kindergarten.

Dorian was silent for a moment, then looked up at Vivienne. "How about you go for me, Vivienne?"

If it were Beatrice who had invited them, he would definitely not go.

But he couldn't refuse Scott's invitation.

Even though their family had been separated from the Brooks family, his bond with him remained.

But the party was for Arabella, who had previously falsely accused him. He still had a lingering fear of her. After much thought, it seemed most appropriate for Vivienne to go.

After all, Arabella was still her student.

"Sure." Vivienne had no objections.

The Brooks family's invitation was unexpected, yet not completely surprising.

The party was in two days at the Victoria Hotel.

Arabella had gone all out for her party, inviting many of her classmates and people from all the major families in Havenwood.

Outsiders didn't realize that the Brooks family held the party in Havenwood to avoid embarrassment.

They assumed it was because they loved Arabella so much that they were willing to travel all the way to Havenwood to accommodate her.

When news of the reunion party spread, praises, and flattery for Arabella came from all corners. Those who wanted to get in good with the Brooks family conveniently forgot her past misdeeds.

...

On the day of the party, when Vivienne arrived, the hotel's banquet hall was already bustling with

activity.

The men were in suits, chatting and laughing. The women were dressed in elegant gowns, each trying to outshine the other. Even the students from Cloudcrest High School were in formal attire.

Vivienne stood out in her simple T-shirt, jeans, and sneakers among the sea of high heels.

She walked into the banquet hall with a serene expression, attracting many glances, but didn't seem to mind.

She looked up and met Arabella's eyes. Arabella was surrounded by a group of young boys and girls and was coming down from the upstairs lounge.

"Sis, you're here." Arabella smiled politely at Vivienne in front of everyone. As the star of the day, her smile had a hint of condescension.

Her gaze swept past Vivienne, failing to spot Dorian and Cordelia. Although she was a bit miffed, she thought it was for the best. It was good to avoid gossip about past events.

But Percival was nowhere to be found.

"Why didn't Percival accompany you?"

"Hehehe. Arabella, don't you understand why after seeing her dressed like this?" A round-faced girl standing next to Arabella offered a sarcastic laugh. "Mr. Ellington must be too embarrassed to show up, of course."

"Exactly. How could your sister show up dressed like this?" Another girl also sneered at Vivienne.

"Does the young master of the Ellington family not even deign to gift his fiancée a proper gown? I

heard she grew up in the countryside; no wonder she's not fit for high society."

Vivienne lowered her eyes to her own attire.

Yeah.

It wasn't exactly the best.

In fact, before she left home, Cordelia had prepared a beautiful dress for her. She had intentionally chosen to dress as she was.

She was quite vindictive.

Although Arabella had paid for her false accusations against Dorian, her haughty attitude was quite annoying.

She was now Ms. Brooks? Ha!

"Hazel, Leah, stop badmouthing my sister." Arabella pretended to scold her companions, then turned to Vivienne with feigned kindness. "Sister, do you not have the money for a proper dress? I have several spare gowns in my dressing room; why don't you borrow one and change?"

"Arabella, why are you being so kind?" Hazel, a sycophant Arabella had recently befriended at school, was eager to please Arabella. Of course, she would eagerly disparage Vivienne.

"Each of your dresses is expensive. What if she stains or damages one? Or steals it to sell somewhere?"

"Oh, stop talking nonsense!" Arabella covered her mouth with her hand, feigning shock as she retorted,

"How could my sister ever do such a thing?"

She yelled it out loud. Vivienne already stood out at the party due to her attire.

With Arabella's outburst, the attention of those around them was drawn to them. Their conversation was overheard, and people began pointing fingers at Vivienne.

"This is no lie. The starry skirt you're wearing alone is worth a million." Leah, who came from Rivenwood, was unaware of the past grievances between Arabella and Vivienne.

However, Arabella had spoken ill of Vivienne during her time in Rivenwood, so Leah naturally had no good feelings towards her.

With a disdainful look, she pointed at Arabella's starry skirt. "See this? This is a work by the internationally renowned designer, Charles. I bet you've never seen a dress as expensive in your life. For a hick like you, even touching it would be a sacrilege."

Chapter 167

Vivienne arched an eyebrow as a smirk tugged at the corners of her lips.

Her gaze roamed over Arabella's starry skirt. The gradient of deep to light night blue, embroidered with scattered rhinestones, certainly made it seem as though she was wearing the night sky.

However, this design was nothing unique. It was certainly not anything special in the vast collection of Charles' creations.

"What are you laughing at?!" Leah couldn't stand Vivienne's nonchalant demeanor. Born into wealth, she believed that those less fortunate should worship them.

"Finished showing off?" Vivienne nonchalantly asked, motioning towards the buffet table. "I'm going to grab something to eat."

"You... you came to the banquet just to eat?" Hazel was in disbelief.

"And why not?" Vivienne retorted nonchalantly.

"Let's go. Don't bother with this hick." Leah sneered. "I bet if you mentioned Master Charles to her, she wouldn't even know who he is. Look at her. Telling people she's your sister would only bring you down."

"Such a big mouth!"

A cold laugh echoed from the entrance of the banquet hall. Arabella's eyes lit up, and she quickly primped her hair, putting on what she believed was her most charming smile as she greeted the newcomer. "Percival, you're here!"

She had spent half the day selecting her gown, finally managing to convince Scott to air-freight this starry skirt, a creation of Master Charles. Besides wishing to present her best self, she also hoped to capture Percival's heart.

However, she hadn't expected Percival not to show up.

When she saw Vivienne alone, she felt both schadenfreude and disappointment. Now that Percival was here, she was overjoyed.

Percival was dressed in a handcrafted suit from Veloria. Only up close could one see the butterflies

embroidered with black thread on the black fabric, adding a touch of liveliness to the otherwise solemn suit.

He strode forward, pulling Vivienne into his embrace. Without any prompt, Thomas brought forth a garment bag containing a gown, unveiling it before the crowd.

"I heard someone was complaining about my fiancée's outfit being insufficiently classy." Percival's intent to defend Vivienne was clear. "Would this gown be appropriate for your family's gathering?"

Everyone took a closer look at the gown. The champagne-colored fishtail dress was adorned with layers of intricate butterfly embroidery, illuminated brilliantly under the banquet lights.

"Isn't this the 'Dream Butterfly' dress that Master Charles only made one of?" Someone recognized it.

"Yes. When the design was first revealed, everyone praised it, and countless people wanted to order one. But Master Charles only made one and refused to make any more."

"I remember this dress being auctioned off at L&D Auctions for two billion. My sister was so upset about not getting it that she didn't eat properly for a month."

"My mom was the same. She lost at poker for a month because she was so upset, and my dad scolded her for being wasteful."

Hazel and Helen Edwards were speechless as they watched the dress unfold. Arabella's eyes flashed with jealousy, and she clenched her fists so tightly that her nails nearly pierced her palms.

"Vivienne, let me accompany you to change into this." Percival's gentle gaze landed on Vivienne.

Vivienne looked at the dress, feeling a bit surprised, and then back at Percival. She was planning on saying she didn't need to change and that she had intentionally worn her current outfit.

But seeing Percival's protective gesture, she smiled softly and followed him to the dressing room.

Inside the dressing room, a renowned international makeup and hair team was already waiting.

Twenty minutes later, Percival led Vivienne back to the banquet.

Everyone turned their gaze towards them. The whole room's lights seemed to focus on the couple.

Vivienne's butterfly-patterned fishtail gown echoed the butterflies on Percival's suit, creating an intimate

and harmonious couple look.

After the makeover, Vivienne's black curls added to her allure. She looked stunningly beautiful.

Someone suddenly gasped. "Look at the pink diamond jewelry set Vivienne is wearing. Isn't that

Master Jessica's 'Ophelia's Heart' that was auctioned off two years ago?"

Everyone's gaze fell onto Vivienne's collarbone and ears. The heart-shaped pink diamond was at least three carats, and it was surrounded by smaller diamonds. The teardrop-shaped earrings were also of rare quality.

Many recalled that 'Ophelia's Heart' was auctioned for five billion.

Percival had adorned his fiancée with seven billion worth of jewelry. What a grand gesture!

In contrast, Arabella's starry skirt looked rather common.

The room fell silent. Arabella could read the message in everyone's eyes. A surge of frustration welled up in her, almost making her vomit blood.

Yet Vivienne, arm in arm with Percival, approached her. "Did you know that your starry skirt is one of Charles' early works? One he was least satisfied with."

The room fell even quieter. Arabella nearly cracked her silver teeth from clenching so hard. While holding a glass of champagne, she approached Vivienne with a smile and a flash of malice in her eyes.

"Sister, you look beautiful in this dress."

Thomas accidentally stepped on Arabella's dress train, yanking it backward. Arabella let out a shocked

gasp, falling backward. All the champagne that was going to be poured on Vivienne ended up on herself.

"Young lady, our young madam's dress is quite expensive. It'd be best if you'd be careful." Thomas bluntly exposed Arabella's shady intentions.

"Percival!" Arabella looked at Percival in distress. "Are you going to let your assistant bully me like this?!"

Percival glanced at Thomas, who understood his cue. He took out a cheque and tossed it at Arabella.

"Here's the money for your dress."

Already holding Vivienne's hand, Percival led her to dine in a corner.

"Well done! Spectacularly done!" Cecilia appeared from nowhere and grabbed Vivienne's hand. "I saw your sister mocking you earlier. It made me furious!"

She had wanted to rush out and slap Arabella, but the Ellingtons and the Brooks had always been on good terms. As an elder, she had to maintain her dignity. It wouldn't do to quarrel with the younger generation. It was best if Percival handled it.

Chapter 168

Upon seeing the disdainful looks Vivienne received, Cecilia was seething.

She glared at Percival. "I'm warning you. If I see anyone else look down on your wife again, don't

blame me for disowning you as a son!"

"Isn't it interesting that you, the famous Scent Maestro, Master Q, aren't famous?" Cecilia sneered.

"Why do they think you can't afford to buy a gown?"

The more she thought about it, the angrier she got. She took Vivienne's hand and led her to another

part of the hall. "Today, the Brooks family invited many international supermodels to liven up the event,

showcasing designs by renowned designer Mike."

"Mike's designs may not be as brilliant as Master Charles', but they are still very sought after."

"Let's go. Mom will buy you all of Mike's designs as engagement gifts!"

Vivienne was stunned. "Mom?"

Was their relationship progressing that fast?

She hadn't even decided to marry Percival yet. She was just not breaking off the engagement.

Before she could refuse, Cecilia had already dragged her away.

After they left, Percival felt a tug at his pants leg.

"Brother..."

He looked down to see Isolde standing beside him with a disgruntled expression. He frowned. "Why are you wandering around alone?"

"I'm not wandering." Isolde pouted. "Mom saw Vivienne being bullied and ran off to call you. She forgot about me."

Percival sighed.

Today, the older members of the Brooks family, considering their status, were still upstairs in the lounge, enjoying coffee with a few familiar friends from Rivenwood.

Meanwhile, Beatrice and her sons were mimicking the Brooks' family's high-brow attitude, lingering upstairs as well.

However, it wouldn't be good to let Arabella, the star of the event, greet everyone alone, so they sent Ronald and Ashley, the younger members of the family, to help entertain the guests.

Ashley, who had been accompanying a few well-off ladies in the back coffee room, was unaware of the disturbance at the banquet. When she noticed Cecilia hadn't returned for a long time, she went out to look for her.

When she arrived at the banquet hall, she saw a tall man in a black suit. He had one hand in his pocket and the other holding a petite, doll-like girl, walking towards the stage.

The man's features were cold and deep, and his lips were slightly pursed. His entire demeanor was intimidating, yet it made people unable to resist a second glance.

Ashley was taken aback. The last time she saw him, he was a disabled man in a wheelchair. She never expected to be so taken aback upon seeing him again.

She watched as Percival led Isolde into the audience seats on the left side of the stage, handed Isolde over to Cecilia, and then sat down next to a young woman in a champagne-colored fishtail gown. He affectionately brushed a stray hair off her shoulder.

The young woman turned to look at him. Her face was stunningly beautiful, and her eyes were cool yet soft.

It was Vivienne.

Ashley instantly recognized the "Dream Butterfly" gown on Vivienne. A design that was one of a kind in the world. Her gaze then shifted to Arabella, who was looking rather sullen.

Just then, one of the staff members Ashley had assigned to keep an eye on Arabella walked over and whispered the recent happenings into her ear. A playful smile appeared on Ashley's lips.

It seemed like there would be a good show to watch.

Instead of joining the crowd on the stage, she turned to find Ronald. She needed to delay him so he wouldn't be able to come over and help Arabella too soon.

The more fiercely the Hawthorn sisters fought, the more interesting it would be.

As she was about to leave, she couldn't help but take another look at Percival. He was leaning over, speaking affectionately to Vivienne. The stage lights highlighted his perfectly sculpted profile.

Suppressing her racing heart, Ashley lifted her skirt and hurried off to find Ronald.

...

On the stage.

The Brooks family had invited renowned fashion designer Mr. Mike to celebrate Arabella's birthday.

Known for his exquisite gowns, many celebrities felt honored to wear his designs on the red carpet.

His self-established brand, Mike Turner, exceeded his competitors in both bespoke and ready-to-wear sales. Therefore, when Mr. Mike wanted to break into the domestic market, several companies were

battling to secure the brand's agency rights.

In the end, the agency rights went to the Edwards Group, which primarily dealt in clothing.

"How's that, Arabella? I'm pretty good to you, right?" Helen said to Arabella, who had changed out of her champagne-soaked starry skirt. "It took a lot of convincing to get Mike to come and celebrate your birthday."

Not only that, but Mike had also brought along numerous international supermodels in consideration of his recent partnership with the Edwards Group.

Although it was just a small fashion show, the designs showcased were his latest couture pieces, so he spent most of his time backstage overseeing the models and hadn't made an appearance yet.

"Thank you." Arabella's smile was forced. The gown she had changed into was one of Mike's new designs, but it paled in comparison to the starry skirt she had worn earlier. Even so, the starry skirt was nothing compared to the 'Dream Butterfly' gown Vivienne was wearing.

"She's just clinging to Percival." Helen followed Arabella's gaze and scoffed dismissively. "No matter how fancy her dress is, it can't hide the fact that she's a country bumpkin."

"Exactly. Look at her pretending to appreciate the fashion show. Does she even have the taste to appreciate it?" Hazel also sneered.

"The way you talk behind people's backs is quite unattractive."

Hazel turned around, only to find that Charlotte had silently arrived. She was standing at the back row with her arms crossed over her chest. She scoffed at them and then headed towards Vivienne.

She hadn't initially planned to come. Yet, due to the other members of her family being preoccupied, she was left with no choice but to attend, which explained her deliberate tardiness.

"Did I say something wrong?" Hazel shifted her gaze from Charlotte to Vivienne, who was looking at the runway with a lack of interest. After noticing that Charlotte had arrived, Vivienne nodded slightly at her.

Before, when Percival and Cecilia were absent, Hazel would boldly ridicule Vivienne. But now, after seeing the two figures sitting on either side of Vivienne like bodyguards, she realized she could no longer be too insolent.

However, seeing the aggrieved look on Arabella's face and the luxurious dress and jewelry on Vivienne that stirred her jealousy, she couldn't help but mockingly provoke her. "Vivienne, what do you think of

Mike's show this time?"

She didn't really expect Vivienne to share any thoughts. In her opinion, Vivienne, who could attend a banquet in a T-shirt and jeans, surely had no sense of fashion. She would probably just parrot a few words of praise like everyone else.

Surprisingly, Vivienne stared at a newly revealed ball gown and furrowed her brow, then shared a thoughtful critique. "Beyond is as wrong as falling short."

Chapter 169

The moment Vivienne spoke, a hush fell over the bleachers. Everyone who heard her turned to look in her direction.

What did Vivienne just say?

Hazel almost thought she had misheard. Before she could utter a mocking retort, Helen abruptly stood up, her icy gaze fixed on Vivienne. "What did you just say?"

"I said, 'Beyond is as wrong as falling short.'" Vivienne's long eyelashes fluttered slightly as she met Helen's gaze and repeated her words calmly.

"What gives you, a country bumpkin, the right to judge Mike's designs like that?" Helen's face was a

picture of outrage.

When her family, the Edwards family, initially vied for the agency rights to Mr. Mike's brand, it was partly

due to the potential profit but also because Helen was a big fan and had highly recommended it.

Helen had always been a devoted fan of Mike. She never missed a show and had collected every piece he had ever designed. In her eyes, aside from the elusive Master Charles, Mr. Mike was the most gifted fashion designer in recent years.

She was now preparing for her college entrance exams and had no plans to attend a local university.

Instead, she was aiming to study abroad at Mike's alma mater, the prestigious King's Design Academy in Veloria.

Her dream was to become a fashion designer like Charles and Mike.

She had refrained from clashing with Vivienne due to the presence of Percival and Cecilia, not wanting to offend the Ellington family. However, hearing Vivienne belittle her idol's designs was something she could not tolerate.

"Have a problem?" Vivienne had the model on stage, dressed in a gown with a gradient color scheme,

stop. She pointed at the large bow on her shoulder and waist and asked, "The dress already has a complex color scheme, and the hem has a complicated cake-like design. Wouldn't it be better if the upper half was simple? Isn't adding two large bows overdoing it?"

"What do you know?!" Helen, after seeing Mike's design belittled by Vivienne, retorted angrily, "This is called vintage. Do you understand?"

Charlotte laughed and commented on the gradient-colored dress. "I think Vivienne is right. The design is too complicated. There are too many highlights but no focal point."

"Nonsense!" Helen glared at Charlotte. "Don't side with her just because she's Percival's fiancée and you're trying to curry favor with the Ellington family!"

Charlotte's face turned cold. "Don't assume I'm like you, who is willing to befriend any scum to get close to the Brooks family!"

"Charlotte, I didn't offend you, so why are you attacking me out of nowhere?!" Arabella's eyes turned red at the blink of an eye. Her wronged expression made Charlotte's skin crawl.

"Helen is right. Mike's talent is highly sought after internationally. If you think his designs are bad, why don't you try designing clothes? Why don't you become designers? My family invited Mike to design for

my engagement party. I won't allow you to insult him at will."

"If you can't do it, just admit it." Hazel was afraid of Percival and Cecilia and didn't dare provoke

Vivienne directly. But she wasn't afraid of Charlotte. A malicious glint flashed in her eyes as she

challenged her. "If you're so confident, then why don't you improve the dress?

"Show everyone your improved version. Let's see if it's better than Mike's original design."

Charlotte fell silent immediately. She couldn't design clothes, and even if she could, she wouldn't dare

risk offending Mike by altering his design.

Unexpectedly, Vivienne spoke to a waiter, who quickly brought her a pair of scissors and a sewing kit.

She accepted them and calmly walked onto the stage.

"Vivienne, what are you doing?" Helen exclaimed in shock, reaching out to pull Vivienne away. "Get

down from there! How dare you touch Mike's design?!"

Vivienne ignored her and snipped off the large bow on the model's shoulder with a swift clip of her

scissors.

"Vivienne, I'll kill you!" Helen screamed in fury. "How could you?!"

She turned to the model and yelled, "Are you insane? Why are you letting her ruin Mike's dress?!"

The model, an Italian woman, didn't understand English and could only stare at Helen with puzzled eyes.

Even if she didn't understand the language, she shouldn't have let someone damage the dress she was wearing. Yet she simply stood there, allowing Vivienne to have her way.

Below the stage, the crowd was growing as more people were drawn by Helen's screams. Everyone looked at Vivienne with furrowed brows. Regardless of the circumstances, altering someone else's design was an insult to the designer.

In their eyes, Vivienne's actions were incredibly rude.

Yet, due to Percival and Cecilia's presence, none of them said anything.

"What's going on?"

A kindly but somewhat weathered voice sounded from the edge of the crowd.

Everyone turned to see the crowd parting to make way for Ashley and Ronald, who were accompanying Judith. Scott and Melissa followed close behind, with Beatrice and her two sons trailing after them.

"Grandma!" Arabella spotted Judith and immediately clung to her arm. Her voice was tinged with panic.

"You have to stop my sister. She's gone mad! She's about to ruin Mr. Mike's dress!"

Judith frowned. Mike might only be a designer, but he was a valued guest they had gone to great

lengths to invite. He shouldn't be insulted in such a manner.

But when her gaze landed on the girl wielding scissors on the runway, she was taken aback.

It was her!

The same girl who had saved her back in Havenwood.

"Why didn't any of you stop her?" Ronald asked, his brows knitted together in confusion.

Arabella opened her mouth as if to say something, but no words came out. Her eyes darted nervously

between Percival and Cecilia, her expression a mix of fear and helplessness.

"Who would dare stop the fiancé of Mr. Ellington?" Hazel interjected. A cold smirk played on her lips as

she spoke for Arabella.

"Grandmother, you must stop my sister immediately. Look how upset Helen is!" Arabella pleaded, her

face full of concern. "Mike came here because of her family. If she offends Mike and it leads to a fallout

between the Edwards family and him, then wouldn't I be the most wicked person ever?"

Helen was indeed on the verge of tears. Her hand clutched her dress as she rushed onto the runway, intending to intercept Vivienne.

Vivienne was just in the process of tearing off the large bow on the dress and removing the excess design elements.

As she turned around, revealing the dress that had been hidden behind her, Helen froze. Stripped of its excessive embellishments, the dress was transformed into a strapless beauty. Its design suddenly became much more elegant and streamlined.

Chapter 170

Helen quickly recovered and glared at Vivienne.

"You think turning Mike's perfectly fine one-shoulder gown into a common strapless dress is considered design?"

"Exactly." Hazel joined Helen on the runway, crossed her arms, and chuckled. Her eyes disdainfully glanced at the gradient dress that Vivienne had altered. "I thought you had some real talent. But this is just mediocre."

"What's the rush?" Vivienne glanced at them indifferently.

"You've ruined this dress!" Helen shrieked, unable to contain her anger. "Mike hates anyone tampering with his designs! If our collaboration with Mike's independent brand is ruined because of you, I won't let you off the hook!"

"And?" Vivienne responded expressionlessly. "Wasn't it you who asked me to change it? Why are you complaining now?"

"You just changed it because we asked? Who do you think you are?!" Helen found Vivienne's arrogance unbelievable. "Mike wouldn't even give a second glance to someone as tasteless as you!"

"Heh, this is the first time I've seen someone so full of themselves." Hazel looked at Vivienne mockingly. "Let's see. If Mike praises your alteration, I'll shave my head right here on this runway!"

Vivienne lightly lifted her lashes as her gaze swept towards Hazel. She suddenly laughed. Her laughter was enchanting and captivating. "Shave your head? I like that! Are you sure you want to compete?"

"Definitely!" Hazel made a firm stand. "If Mike really praises you, I won't just shave my head here and now; I'll keep it bald for the rest of my life!"

"Very well." Vivienne nodded. "Then let's compete!"

She cut out an irregular step shape at the chest of the dress with her scissors, then sewed some cloth strips cut out from the butterfly she had torn off earlier, making a lapel design.

The dress had already been cut by Vivienne. It was too late for Helen to stop her now, so she just stood aside coldly, thinking about how she was going to explain to Mike later and put all the blame on Vivienne.

As she was pondering, she suddenly heard a wave of discussion from below the stage, pointing at Vivienne.

"This alteration actually looks really good."

"Indeed. It's the same dress, but this modification makes it completely different."

"Mr. Ellington's fiancée is quite talented."

After hearing this, Hazel's face also darkened slightly, but from her angle, where she was standing with Helen, she could only see the back of Vivienne blocking the view of the dress. She couldn't see what the dress looked like now.

Just as she was about to pull Helen to check it out, a man walked out from backstage with a puzzled face.

“Mike!” Helen hurriedly greeted him.

“What’s happening? Why aren't the models continuing to walk?” Mike asked.

“Mike, I'm really sorry. Someone audaciously destroyed your dress on the spot, claiming she wanted to change your design.” Helen looked like she was about to cry. "It's all my fault for not stopping her and for not protecting your work.”

“It’s not Helen’s fault.” Hazel also came over and added fuel to the fire. "It's all because of that arrogant Vivienne. She belittled your design to nothing and said that once you see her alterations, you will only praise her and not dare criticize.”

Mike frowned. Like Helen, he could only see Vivienne's back and not the current state of the dress.

It had to be said that Vivienne's back was beautiful. The soft blue light of the runway cast a mysterious veil over her silhouette as her graceful shoulder blades gently undulated with the movements of her hands.

If she weren't such an arrogant person who didn't understand the concept of respecting other people's work, Mike thought he would have asked her to be the model for his first season based on this

silhouette alone.

What a pity.

Her beautiful silhouette and the 'Dream Butterfly' dress she was wearing were all wasted.

Mike's eyes landed on the Dream Butterfly on Vivienne, revealing a trace of fanatical admiration. But he

felt it was a real waste for a person like that to wear this dress.

After seeing Mike's angry expression, a cold smile appeared on the corner of Hazel's mouth. She was

sure she had won.

Vivienne's disrespectful act on another designer's show was sure to ruin her reputation; even if she

were Percival's fiancée, it wouldn't help.

The crowd below the stage, seeing Mike's livid face, also believed that Vivienne was in trouble.

After all, any designer would find it intolerable to have their work publicly criticized and altered by a

greenhorn.

Before Mike could reach Vivienne, she had finished all her alterations. She moved slightly to the side,

and the first thing Mike saw was the altered dress.

The gradient cake-like skirt appeared much cleaner after the complicated design was removed.

The layered tulle gradually stacked up to the waist, and the strapless neckline was trimmed into an asymmetrical small lapel design with a V-shaped opening in the middle, revealing a hint of cleavage.

Suddenly, the dress went from being mundane to elegant and dreamy.

Mike felt a spark in front of his eyes, and he was both surprised and delighted.

He strode over with his eyes fixated on the dress, unable to see anything else, and kept exclaiming around the dress.

"My God! I knew something was off after the dress was finished! My original design was really crap!

This is what a true haute couture gown should be like!"

The whole venue fell silent for a moment; even the runway music stopped.

Hazel and Helen were stunned. They couldn't believe their ears.

Hazel looked particularly awful. What had she just heard?

Mike was praising Vivienne's alteration?

He was saying his own design was crap?

Was he possessed or something?

Apparently, Helen had the same idea as Hazel. She walked over to ask Mike what was going on. Could it be that Percival was threatening him with his gaze from below the stage?

The sight of the stunningly altered bustier dress left Helen frozen in her tracks, unable to hide the astonishment in her eyes.

After seeing her friend stop abruptly, Hazel, wide-eyed with shock, wandered over to Vivienne. "Helen, what are you..."

Her words trailed off as she too caught sight of the breathtaking dress. Her heart began to flutter wildly.

How could this be?

Her gaze shifted towards the front of the runway, where Arabella, her eyes shadowed with an unreadable expression, held onto Judith's arm.

Hadn't Arabella said that her sister had grown up in the countryside?

How could she possibly design clothes?

How could someone with such exquisite taste show up at a formal event in just a t-shirt and jeans? It was utterly baffling.