

The Million-Dollar Heart

Chapter 36 “Ha ha!” At that, Leopold burst out laughing. Vivienne was straight to the point with her comeback.

Percival and Thomas didn’t show much emotion, but Isolde looked confused. She tilted her head to look at Vivienne and asked in a childlike tone, “Vivienne, isn’t she a human?”

“Nope.” Vivienne answered frankly. “Ha ha!” Leopold couldn’t hold it in anymore and laughed out loud. Vivienne, you’re a riot!

Isolde thought for a while, then asked, “Is she a ghost then? Why did she disappear when she went into the room with you? Did she use magic to disappear?”

After she said this, she felt something was off and corrected herself, “No, ghosts can’t use magic. They can only scare people.” She then hid in Vivienne’s arms and pretended to be scared, “I’m scared! There’s a ghost!”

Although Isolde’s words were amusing, everyone in the room was smart. They all started thinking seriously about this. Arabella had come to the room with Vivienne, but then she brought people to catch them in the act.

But what they caught was Joseph, so Arabella claimed that Vivienne had drugged him.

Thinking carefully, there were many questions in this situation.

As for what the Hawthorn family was up to, they had no idea, and since it didn’t concern them, no one said anything. They just treated it as a joke.

Arabella’s face was extremely darkened, she suppressed her rage and demanded, “What do you mean by that, sis?” Vivienne gave her a casual glance, “Don’t you understand?”

“I don’t understand!” For some reason, whenever Arabella talked to Vivienne, she couldn’t control herself, her voice unconsciously rising a few pitches, “I came to the room with you, but after I got you your clothes, I left because you told me to go and get Mr. Ellington for you. I don’t know anything about what happened after.”

Arabella saw everyone looking at her strangely and quickly shifted the blame to Vivienne, "The maid heard strange noises from the room, so we came to check. Who knew it would be Joseph here? Only you guys were here during that time, are you saying this has nothing to do with you?"

Vivienne chuckled, her smile mocking, "The maid heard strange noises and came to check?" "Yes." Arabella answered confidently.

She looked around at everyone and said leisurely, "What did you want to see? If Mr. Ellington and I were doing something in there? If we were, wouldn't you usually handle such scandals internally? You guys came in with a group of people, as if you couldn't wait for people to find out. Why were you so certain that Mr. Ellington and I were having an affair?"

Vivienne's gaze turned cold, "Or was it because when you came in and saw that the person inside wasn't me, you were mortified?"

Everyone thought she had a point.

Even if Vivienne and Percival were having an affair, Beatrice should have immediately had the news suppressed and not let it spread.

No family would want their private matters to be publicized, especially in high society where a scandal could be greatly exaggerated by the media.

Yet, Arabella deliberately told Beatrice in front of everyone that Vivienne and Mr. Ellington were alone in the room, as if they were doing something unmentionable.

This was obviously done on purpose.

Everyone understood then, Ms. Vivienne might have been framed, and the person behind it was the talented woman well-known in Havenwood, Arabella.

Everyone looked at Arabella, their eyes filled with various emotions.

Arabella felt everyone's gaze on her, her face burned. She hadn't expected Vivienne, this country girl, to be so logical. With just a few words, she drew everyone's attention to her.

She had underestimated Vivienne.

"You are shameless!" Beatrice cursed in a fit of rage, "You're not even married yet but you're having an illicit affair with Mr. Ellington and framing Joseph. You're not sorry at all and even blame others, you're absolutely lawless."

"Did you see me having an illicit affair with Mr. Ellington? Vivienne replied calmly.

Before Beatrice could say anything, Vivienne interrupted her, "If you didn't see it, why are you throwing dirt at me? I'm arrogant and domineering? I don't respect you? Please tell me, Beatrice, what right do you have to judge my character when you never cared about your own granddaughter and are always critical of your daughter-in-law?"

The room fell silent.

The guests were shocked at the news about the Hawthorn family.

Donan and Cordelia heaved a sigh of relief.

Ever since Vivienne came back, she spoke very little. If she could avoid talking, she wouldn't say a word.

"What nonsense are you talking about!" Beatrice reacted, shouting angrily, "Everyone can see your arrogant and domineering behavior, and you blame me? I don't care about you? With your attitude, have you ever given me a chance to care about you?"

She wished Vivienne would disappear from her sight!

This ungrateful girl, what was she trying to do saying all this in front of so many people? Was she trying to embarrass her?

Vivienne said, "In that case, I'll give you a chance to care about me."

She glanced at Joseph and the maid still struggling in the servant's room, her eyes full of indifference.

Keep struggling! She had made the drug herself, and it would take a long time to wear off.

She shifted her gaze and said nonchalantly, "Mr. Ellington has got some juicy stuff on his hands. You should take a look first, then worry about me."

On hearing this, Percival, in his wheelchair, handed his phone to Thomas, saying, "Since the Hawthorn family loves to watch things, you can project it on the wall. Let's all get a front-row seat."

Thomas acknowledged with a nod, and promptly projected the video from the phone onto the wall. The image gradually came into focus.

Arabella was seen in a corner, handing a packet of something to a nanny, instructing, "During dinner, slip this into Vivienne's glass. And remember, don't get caught."

Arabella's face turned ghostly pale in an instant. There was a camera in that corner? She was sure there wasn't one, but how did Percival get his hands on this?

Percival rested his hands on the arms of his wheelchair, fingers intertwined, speaking in a calm tone, "Beatrice, Hawthorn family's adopted darling has tried to drug Ms. Vivienne. If Ms. Vivienne wasn't medically savvy, our reputation would've been ruined by now."

He slowly raised his eyes, his voice steady, "Ms. Vivienne has been wronged. Don't you care about her?" There wasn't supposed to be a camera there, but then, Vivienne had installed one.:

He didn't question how Vivienne managed to install hidden cameras in all blind spots under the watchful eyes of the Hawthorn family. This video was sent to him by Vivienne.

Yes, Vivienne said, she hoped her fiancé could help her sort this mess.

"Beatrice, here's your chance to show you care about me," Vivienne said seriously.

Chapter 37

Beatrice and Arabella were gobsmacked by this unexpected turn of events, momentarily left speechless.

They didn't expect that Percival would play the surveillance video of a corner, where there was no camera installed.

Who the hell had set up that camera?

This was so infuriating!

However, Beatrice had no time to figure out who was behind the camera, she had to deal with the pressing issue at hand.

As Beatrice was racking her brains for a solution, someone broke the silence among the guests, “I never thought that this talented lady of Havenwood would be so cold—hearted. The adopted daughter slip drugs to Ms. Vivienne. What was she trying to do, kill Ms. Vivienne?”

“She wouldn't dare to kill someone, but she'd dare to ruin a girl's reputation, can't you see that? Beatrice and Arabella were here to catch her in the act. What does that mean? Weren't they trying to hand Ms. Vivienne over to Mr. Ellington?”

“I've seen a lot of the dark side of wealthy families, but this kind of cruelty is a first for me. To go to such lengths for the Ellington family's fortune, making her own granddaughter suffer, it's really an eye-opener for me.”

“You're right, even though the surveillance showed that Arabella made the maid drug Ms. Vivienne, who can guarantee that Beatrice wasn't involved? Just look at the status of the Dorian family, it's clear that Beatrice doesn't like Vivienne, but she also doesn't want to give up the Ellington's fortune, that's why she wanted to set up her granddaughter... We should stay away from the Hawthorn family in the future, who knows when we might get framed.”

The guests had been watching the developments in silence, like spectators on the sidelines.

When the surveillance video was played, they couldn't hold back anymore and started discussing. Their discussions were so loud that Beatrice could hear everything.

Hearing their comments, Beatrice felt a lump in her throat.. She had messed up today, and the reputation of the Hawthorn family was utterly ruined.

But she was a seasoned woman, she just took a deep breath and stepped forward, “I was the one who asked Arabella to drug Ms. Vivienne.”

Things had come this far, she could only protect Arabella. The guests all wore expressions that said, 'just as I thought!

Beatrice walked up to Vivienne, looking down at her, "I don't like you, and I don't like your mother. You two are a disgrace to the Hawthorn family. But since your father brought you back, I'll acknowledge you as my granddaughter."

Vivienne looked at her with a blank expression, listening to her continue.

"You were raised in the Emerald Monastery, without manners or knowledge. Being able to get engaged to the son of the Ellington family is your good fortune. And originally, you were the one who was supposed to marry him. You didn't want to get married, but you wanted Arabella to marry him. She's still in school, how could she possibly get married?"

"The Ellingtons insisted on your marriage, and I couldn't convince you, so I had to think of this method." Beatrice's eyes were filled with tears, "I was wrong, I thought that if your relationship with Mr. Ellington was confirmed, you would agree to get engaged to Mr. Ellington. But I was wrong, I shouldn't have let Joseph drug you."

"Octavia passed out from anger, this is all my fault!" Beatrice expressed guilt while blaming Vivienne for her actions towards Joseph. But those who knew the truth knew that she was trying to shift all the blame onto Vivienne.

Because Vivienne didn't want to marry Percival, Beatrice drugged her. Vivienne refused to comply and instead took action against Joseph.

"Mr. Ellington has something else, do you want to see it?" Vivienne didn't get angry because of Beatrice's words, instead, she smiled faintly.

Hearing this, Beatrice felt a twinge of anxiety, she suspected this was not something good. She felt that Vivienne was always against her.

Without waiting for Vivienne to speak, Beatrice said, "Quickly give the antidote to Joseph."

She was adamant, seemingly not feeling that she did anything wrong by drugging Vivienne.

Joseph and the maid were still in the room, the people outside had already become immune to their noises. But she couldn't let things go on like this.

“Beatrice, framing someone is a criminal offense.” Percival suddenly spoke up, his voice calm, “Are you sure my fiancée is the one who drugged Joseph?”

T... Beatrice didn't dare to confirm.

What happened today was beyond her expectations. She was certain that Vivienne was the one who did this, but she had no evidence.

Now that Vivienne had involved Mr. Ellington, despite Percival not being outstanding, the reputation of the Ellington family was still there. If the Ellington family found out about this, they would definitely come for her.

So she knew that if she confirmed now that Vivienne had drugged Joseph, Percival would immediately call the police.

Seeing Beatrice in a dilemma, Arabella stepped forward, “Sister, it was our fault for drugging you, but since you can neutralize this drug, you can also neutralize the one in Joseph. We hope you can help him out of consideration that we are family.”

Vivienne looked at her coldly, without response.

Seeing that she had no reaction, Arabella turned to Dorian, “Dad, please talk to my sister. Joseph is in such a state, it's really unbearable to see. He's your brother, after all!”

When Dorian found out it was Beatrice who had drugged Vivienne, he nearly passed out.

He really wanted to scold Beatrice, but with so many people around and things already being a mess, he held his tongue. Arabella was begging him right now, and he was tempted to just tell her to get lost.

But Joseph was his real brother. He couldn't bear to.

So he turned to Vivienne, “Vivienne, can you help him?”

Vivienne was silent for a moment, then slowly said, “I'm sorry, my medical skills aren't up to par, I can't help.”

In reality, if Dorian asked her for anything within her ability, she would do it.

But for this? She would never!

She had made the drug herself, so of course she had the antidote!

But to set her up, there was a price to pay!

It wasn't fair that Joseph should bear the cost, he was unlucky today.

She had originally planned to drug Arabella, but when she came out, she happened to bump into Joseph and the nanny... So she just went with the flow!

"How can you not have an antidote?" Arabella's voice involuntarily became shrill, "Didn't you cure yourself?"

She was also pissed off. Why could Vivienne cure the drug she made so easily?

But right now, they just needed to stop this farce as quickly as possible.

Vivienne lifted her eyes, her fallen hair hiding half her face, her voice icy cold, "You, the one who drugged me, are questioning me?"

Chapter 38

Arabella felt a chill run down her spine under Vivienne's piercing gaze.

Vivienne was downright terrifying!

She instinctively took a step back.

Everyone else in the room was equally unnerved by the commanding presence Vivienne exuded.

"Is she really just a country girl?" they all wondered.

Vivienne had an aura around her that even the most well-bred socialites couldn't match.

The room fell into an eerie silence. Dorian broke the silence, asking Vivienne, "Is there really no other way?" "There is. Wait till the drug wears off!" Vivienne's tone softened when she addressed Dorian.

Upon hearing this, Dorian simply nodded, not uttering another word. "If you can't fix this, then let's just head home. We won't be coming here anymore unless absolutely necessary," he said.

His words were a direct challenge to Beatrice. She immediately shot back, "Dorian! What are you implying? Are you cutting ties with me?"

"If you can't stand Vivienne, I won't bring her here to be humiliated. She's my daughter. If you can't love her, then I'll love her for you!"

With that, Dorian took Vivienne and left.

Beatrice was seething with anger. "You bastard! I call the shots in this household! As the child of the Hawthorn family, Vivienne should—follow my commands!"

Vivienne stopped in her tracks, turning back to face her. "My life is mine to control!" Beatrice was rendered speechless, unable to spout her usual insults in the presence of so many people.

Ignoring Beatrice, Vivienne turned to Percival. "Mr. Ellington! There's only one condition for our engagement. Give the intended gifts to Dorian. The Hawthorn family didn't raise me. They have no right to accept the engagement gifts."

Percival simply chuckled, "Alright!"

Beatrice, Arabella, and everyone else in the room were taken aback.

Beatrice was the first to recover, raising her voice, "Wait, engagement? You agreed to get engaged?" Vivienne smirked, "Yes, I did. I agreed days ago. We're getting engaged in ten days. Surprised?"

Beatrice felt as if she'd been struck by lightning. Her mind went blank!

The engagement that Percival had mentioned postponing was actually scheduled for ten days later!

She felt like a complete fool thinking Percival had fallen for Arabella!

Had she known this, she wouldn't have wasted so much effort. Now, she was left with her pride shattered! Damn Vivienne! This must be her doing!

"Vivienne! Our grandmother is your elder. She calls the shots in this household. The engagement gifts should naturally be given to her. Why would they go

to our father?" Arabella finally found her voice, her hands clenched in fists, feeling utterly humiliated by Vivienne. Vivienne had agreed to the engagement all along, but never said a word, making them all look like fools! And now, she won't even allow the Hawthorn family to accept the gifts?

That's unacceptable!

Beatrice quickly agreed, "That's completely unethical!"

Vivienne scoffed, "Well, that's just how I am!"

With that, she turned and left, not even sparing them a glance.

She was able to walk away with such determination, all thanks to her dear son, Dorian.

The drama finally came to an end, and the guests left one after the other.

Despite Beatrice's pleas for discretion, the scandalous event was made public.

By that evening, the Hawthorn family was the talk of the town.

Even the video of Joseph having sex with the maid after being drugged was anonymously uploaded online, with some digital blurring of course.

"High society drama runs deeper than the Mariana Trench. A grandmother drugging her granddaughter? That's a storyline even soap operas wouldn't dare use.

"God knows what Beatrice was thinking. The real Hawthorn child is way more beautiful than the fake one. Did she go blind?"

"I'm most impressed by the real Hawthorn daughter's ability to keep her cool and find an antidote after being drugged. And Mr. Ellington, despite his disability, didn't take advantage of her. Any other man would've lost control.

Totally! I'm totally won over by the real Hawthorn daughter and Mr. Ellington."

Meanwhile, some 'concerned netizens' exposed Joseph's private life.

"Shocking! Joseph and the nanny have a love child who's already six years old!"

"Joseph bought the nanny a house. I've always seen him coming and going. I thought he'd bought it for himself. Turns out, it was for his mistress."

"He's not just with a mistress, but a nanny! Is Joseph blind? His wife is way prettier than that nanny. Why would he ditch her for a nanny? I'll never understand the world of the wealthy!"

After the news broke online, the Hawthorn family was thrown into complete chaos. Octavia woke up in the hospital to see the online posts. She was livid, so angry that she could hardly breathe.

She smashed her phone and stormed off to confront Joseph, "You bastard! Betraying me is one thing, but you even have a bastard child! I'll kill you!"

In the hospital, while taking care of Octavia, Felicity quickly stopped her, "Don't jump to conclusions based on what you read online. We don't know if it's true or not. Don't rush to blame Joseph. Let's find out the truth first, it's never too late to teach him a lesson."

"What's there to find out!" Octavia couldn't help but burst into tears, "They've already posted the pictures online. The woman in Joseph's arms is that home wrecker! They were having an affair right under my nose, and I was completely clueless, like a fool!"

Octavia felt like slapping herself!

She and Joseph were college sweethearts. They were in love for five years before they got married, and their relationship has always been solid.

After their marriage, she tried her best to be a good wife, handling every little thing around the house.

Yet, she would often argue with Joseph over Beatrice.

But, no matter what, she never doubted Joseph's feelings for her!

She thought that Joseph would never betray her; but the pile of evidence in front of her slapped her in the face.

“The media loves to stir up drama. And even if he did cheat on you, we need solid proof.” Felicity gently consoled, “You should rest now. I'll let your dad handle the investigation. If Joseph really did betray you, I'll make sure to get justice for you.”

Octavia thought for a while and said, “Let my dad have a DNA test done on that bastard’s illegitimate child.”

“Alright.”

Chapter 39

When Vivienne and Dorian left the Hawthorn family, it was already 10 o'clock at night.

They were about to head back to Tranquil Estates when Isolde came running over..

“Vivienne, we're going to grab a bite, wanna join us?” Isolde asked, holding Vivienne’s hand, her voice incredibly soft. After the drama that went down at the Hawthorn family, the guests barely got a bite to eat.

Just as Vivienne was about to decline, Thomas wheeled Percival over to her.

Percival spoke up. “Come on, join us. Isolde really likes you. If you don’t come, she'll have trouble sleeping tonight.”

Then he turned to Dorian and Cordelia, “Mr. Dorian and Miss Cordelia, you guys should join us too, might as well take this chance to formally meet!”

“Nah, Dorian declined, “You young folks go ahead and have fun. We're gonna call it a night, Thaddeus has school tomorrow and he needs to rest early.

Dorian then turned to Vivienne and said, “Vivienne, get home early after you eat, a young lady shouldn’t be out all night. If it gets too late, give your old man a call, I'll come pick you up!”

He then shot Percival a warning look, as if to say: You better not dare mess with my daughter, or I'll give you hell!

Percival's mouth twitched. He hadn't messed with her when she was at her most vulnerable, let alone now when she was fully sober!

Vivienne, who had initially planned to decline, said, "...Don't worry!" They've made the decision for her, what room was there for her to refuse? Once they got in the car, they started deciding where to eat.

Four adults, one kid, five different tastes.

Percival wanted French cuisine.

Leopold wanted Italian.

Thomas craved barbecue.

Vivienne desired Brazilian food.

Isolde wanted burgers.

Unable to reach a consensus, they decided to head downtown and make a random pick. So, they drove to the city center, found a parking lot, and got out of the car. Havenwood at 10 PM was bustling with life.

There were dedicated night market stalls in the city center, and all the major stores were open, with customers coming and going.

Thomas was pushing Percival.

Isolde rarely went out shopping, and even when she did, she would quickly return home. She hadn't leisurely strolled around the streets like today, so when she saw the hustle and bustle, she could no longer contain her excitement, dragging Vivienne into a children's clothing store one moment and a shoe store the next!

Although these were just average small shops, not big brands, shopping for clothes is in a woman's nature, and little girls are no exception

Before, Isolde never had the chance to pick out her own pretty clothes. Now that she saw there were clothing stores, she even forgot about eating and just kept shopping for clothes.

By the time they found a place to eat, she had already bought dozens of outfits.

Wow! Cake!” Isolde had just handed her newly bought clothes to Leopold when she saw a bustling cake shop. So, she immediately dragged Vivienne excitedly, “Vivienne, there are cakes, let’s go buy some to eat! | haven’t had any in a long time.”

Vivienne, who was getting a bit bored from shopping for too long, also became excited when she heard about the cakes, “Cakes? Where?”

She had been walking with her head down, not noticing what stores were on the street. She hadn’t enjoyed the deliciousness of cakes for a long time!

Back when she was on the mountain, Matthew would often buy some for her, but after coming down from the mountain, she became busy and could buy them anytime she wanted, so Matthew stopped buying them for her.

However, it seemed she was busy every day, and whenever she wanted to eat cakes, it was often late at night, and the cake shops were already closed.

“Over there!” Isolde pointed to a cake shop not far away, “Vivienne, let’s hurry, | saw that there are only two strawberry cakes left, they’ll be gone if we’re late”

Vivienne’s eyes lit up instantly, she picked up Isolde and dashed towards the cake shop!

Her speed was so fast that Percival, Leopold, and Thomas were all stunned!

They couldn’t figure out what had just happened.

Was it a gust of wind that had just blown by? But there was clearly no wind!

Next, they saw Vivienne, with Isolde, grabbed the two cakes on display in the glass cabinet like a bandit, pay, and then leave! Her actions were incredibly smooth!

A customer who was about to pick up a strawberry cake was left with their hand hanging in the air, stunned!

By the time Vivienne and Isolde were enjoying their cakes with spoons, Percival and the others had just reacted to what happened.

Isolde took a bite of the cake, her face full of joy, “Vivienne, you like strawberry cakes, too. I should've bought more when I came with my brother. It's a pity there were only two strawberry cakes, and they're so small, they're not satisfying at all!”

Even though the cake was small, it tasted really good. “Yes.” Vivienne, having gotten to eat cake, was in a good mood and had a charming smile on her face, “I like it a lot.” She loved strawberry cakes, almost every new style, Matthew would buy for her.

She had eaten at least a hundred different styles of strawberry cakes, but none of them were as good as that special taste in her memory.

She once had a strawberry cake made by someone, that taste was something she would never forget. But that person's figure in her memory was becoming very blurry.

So blurry that she could hardly remember that person's face.

Percival and the others just watched them eat their cakes in silence.

Seeing how much they were enjoying their cakes, Leopold couldn't help but ask, “Is the cake really that good?” It looked pretty ordinary, nothing special!

And cakes are made from cream and sugar, eating them would make you gain weight.

Don't all girls fear gaining weight? How come they're eating so happily?

Vivienne was in a good mood, so her tone was cheerful when she replied, “Wanna try some?”

The shop assistant gave her two extra spoons, since she was in a good mood, she could share some with them! Leopold took a look at the cake, “Nah, you go ahead and enjoy it.”

After all, there's only so much. If he eats it, there won't be much left.

Percival didn't say anything, just stared at Vivienne, his eyes deep and thoughtful. After a long while, he finally spoke slowly, “You really like strawberry cake, huh?”

“Yeah!” Vivienne grinned ear to ear, absolutely over the moon.

Percival looked thoughtful, his gaze on her full of meaning.

She and that kid, they shared the same taste.

Was it a coincidence?

Percival shot Vivienne a sideways glance, "I'll buy your cakes from now on. Anytime there's a new one, I'll get it for you." "Great!" Vivienne chirped happily, "I love strawberry cake."

She paused, "Of course, I also like other flavors."

But her first choice would always be strawberry cake.

"Alright." Percival replied with a smile.

Chapter 40

Vivienne and Isolde were munching on cake when they finally decided on where to eat dinner. They went for French cuisine!

Given that Isolde was a kid, they ordered some dishes on the lighter side.

By the time they finished dinner, it was already eleven o'clock. Isolde was feeling a bit tired and wanted to head back to get some sleep.

Percival suggested that Thomas should give Vivienne a ride home, but Vivienne refused. She wanted to take a stroll around the city alone.

Living up in the mountains for a decade, she didn't get to experience the hustle and bustle of city life. Even on the rare occasions she came down to the city, she would always finish the business, and then head straight back.

The weather was quite nice today, with a cool breeze that made her feel super comfy.

Percival insisted on escorting her home, but Vivienne was adamant about going alone.

In the end, Percival caved in, only reminding her, "Send me a text when you get home, just so I know you're safe." "Alright."

Thanks to spending the day with Isolde and the delicious strawberry cake, Vivienne was starting to warm up to Percival. She wasn't as frosty as before and even managed a small smile.

After Percival and the others left, Vivienne started to make her way home.

Tranquil Estates was close to downtown. It was no more than a fifteen—minute stroll.

But Vivienne took her time, taking in the sights of the bustling city.

Halfway home, she was jolted out of her thoughts by frantic shouts from behind her, "Outta the way! Outta the way!"

Vivienne turned around to see a group of people running towards her, with another group of stick—wielding folks hot on their heels.

When she caught sight of the person in the lead, she couldn't help but raise an eyebrow. Well, look who it is!

As they ran up to her, the lead runner suddenly stopped, uttering in surprise, "Miss Vivienne?" ©

Before Vivienne could respond, the person looked back to see the others catching up, and without missing a beat, grabbed Vivienne and pulled her along.

-Perhaps because of Vivienne's delay, they had lost ground and soon found themselves surrounded.

The person shielded Vivienne behind her, anger flashing in her eyes as she addressed a twenty-something, buzz—cut man in front of him, "David, you called back up because you knew you can't beat me, huh? Real manly of you!"

"Charlotte! | admit, | can't take you on! But don't think you can just run away! In our line of work, winner takes all. It's your bad luck running into me today! If you've got the guts, bring your own backup!" David retorted fiercely.

Vivienne was left speechless. She had walked into a street fight?

And the main character was Charlotte, the girl who had spoken up for her at the Hawthorn family banquet, from the Redwood family?

This was certainly a surprise. Charlotte spat in his direction, “If you hadn’t tricked me, why would I be here with only three people?” The more she thought about it, the angrier she got!

After leaving the Hawthorn family, she was planning on grabbing a bite with some friends. But then someone came saying one of her friends had too much to drink, so she and three others went over without a second thought.

Turns out, it was a trap set by David, and they were ambushed.

She had challenged David to a one-on-one, but that bastard brought reinforcements when he couldn’t beat her — and not just one or two, but over twenty!

How was she supposed to take on so many people? So, she ran!

“Enough with the chit chat! You put my buddy in the hospital last time. This time, you’re leaving with a broken leg. David brandished his stick menacingly.

“You want one of my legs? Fine! But our feud is our problem. She’s got nothing to do with it, let her go.” Charlotte pointed at Vivienne.

David glanced at Vivienne, his eyes lighting up. She was beautiful!

Charlotte rolled her eyes, disgusted. “We have rules. Don’t drag innocent people into our mess. We’ll settle our own scores!” David tore his gaze away from Vivienne, thought for a moment, and said, “Alright!”

Charlotte let out a sigh of relief, turning to Vivienne, “Go, now.”

And then, in a whisper that only Vivienne could hear, “Get word to the Redwood family for me. Tell my dad if he doesn’t do something, he’ll be looking at my corpse tomorrow.”

Vivienne was speechless.

Just like that, she was suddenly involved in their dispute, and now she was a messenger?

But considering Charlotte had stood up for her at the Hawthorn’s, she figured she could help her out this once.

Vivienne nodded and took off.

Seeing her go, Charlotte sighed in relief. The Redwood family wasn't far, about a five-minute drive.

But hailing a cab wasn't really an option right now, so Vivienne had to run. If she was quick, she could make it in ten minutes.

Charlotte was confident in her abilities. Even though the other side had twenty people, they were four. They could hold out for fifteen minutes.

With that, she muttered to herself, "You'd better get here fast, or you won't have anyone left to look after you." Just as Charlotte was bracing herself for the fight, Vivienne suddenly returned.

Charlotte frowned, "What are you doing back here?"

Was Vivienne out of her mind? Couldn't she see what was going on?

She'd already left, why come back?

And more importantly, with Vivienne back, who would get her message to the Redwoods!

Instead of responding, Vivienne walked up to David, "How much were the medical bills for your injured friend?" David was taken aback, "Three grand!"

Vivienne furrowed her brow in thought, then said seriously, "Here's the deal, I'll give you twenty grand. Ten grand for your friend's medical bills, and the other ten to settle the beef between you and Charlotte. How does that sound?"

At this, Charlotte, David and his crew were all stunned, eyes wide!

Charlotte was the first to snap back to reality, quickly stepping up to her and snapping, "What are you doing? These guys are real thugs, they're vengeful, there's no way money can buy them off!"

Vivienne turned to her, her expression even more serious than before, "If it can be solved with money, it's not a problem!" Charlotte was at lost for words

Of course she knew that!

Her family, the Redwoods, are loaded!

Twenty grand is just pocket change to her!

The point was those guys don't care about money!

Vivienne ignored her, instead turning to David and asking seriously, "What do you think? Will you consider it? Or maybe you have a counter offer?"

David didn't speak, but was mulling it over in his mind.

He was a local mobster, leading a crew of over twenty boys, with a boss above him.

Their daily bread came from managing their turf and collecting protection money.

But between paying off the boss and taking care of his boys, there was barely anything left each month.

To be honest, with the money they made, even a decent meal was a serious consideration. After all, every meal eaten was one less they could afford.

If they had any other capabilities, who would choose to live like this.

But now, with the prospect of getting twenty grand, he saw a glimmer of hope for the months ahead.

Vivienne didn't disturb him, allowing him to think.

After a while, David looked at Vivienne and said, "Thirty grand! If you can come up with it, we can make peace."

He actually thought twenty grand would be enough, but he put forward thirty grand to leave some room for bargaining.