

## **Million-Dollar 371**

### Chapter 371

Judith's face drained of color.

How on earth could Percival know about this?

She had confided this secret to no one in the Brooks family, not even her own flesh and blood.

She had taken the solitary trip to Emerald Mountain to ensure there were no loose ends.

But why?

Why did Percival know?

Judith's expression flickered with panic before she fought to regain composure, irritation lacing her

voice. "What are you blabbering about? When have I ever brought a hitman there? Vivienne knows the

truth. She saved me. I was the one being hunted!"

Percival chuckled, a knowing smirk on his face. "You seem to be unaware that my teacher founded the

very organization of hitmen you sought out. What a coincidence, isn't it?"

"What?" Judith was utterly stunned, disbelief etched on her face.

They were Karen's people?

No wonder they turned on her!

She vividly recalled hiring the organization and them assigning a hitman to accompany her. All had been well until they reached Emerald Monastery. The hitman leader's face turned ashen when she mentioned Karen's name. They even double-checked with her, asking if her target was indeed Karen's child.

She had confirmed it without hesitation.

And that was when they turned on her.

Unknown to them, Judith was skilled in fighting arts, a secret she had kept hidden for decades.

Cornered, she had no choice but to fight for her life.

Thus, she fled in desperation.

But these were trained hitmen. How could she possibly escape their clutches? The terrain of Emerald

Mountain was treacherous, and despite her efforts to elude them, she was eventually captured.

In a moment of sheer panic, she claimed to possess something left behind by Karen, bargaining for her life in exchange for the item.

Perhaps the hitmen harbored deep feelings for Karen, for the mere mention of her name stayed their

lethal hands.

They demanded she hand it over, but she had nothing, especially after her frantic escape had left her without even her phone or purse.

It was then that Vivienne appeared.

Judith only saw Vivienne toss a handful of white powder before the attackers collapsed. Recognizing

Vivienne's extraordinary abilities, Judith clung to her for safety and begged to be escorted home.

Despite her cold exterior, Vivienne's warmth shined through as she reluctantly ensured Judith's safety every step of the way.

When the hitmen caught up with them again, Vivienne dealt with them swiftly.

Whatever Karen had left behind must have been of vital importance, but Judith was clueless. All she

knew was that the chase persisted until they reached the boundaries of Havenwood, at which point the hitmen vanished.

Judith could not fathom why at the time, but it all made sense now.

Havenwood had been Karen's sanctuary and Vivienne's home. Perhaps the hitmen refrained from disrupting Vivienne's peace.

However, why they failed to recognize Karen's daughter remained a mystery.

Percival's gaze briefly flickered to Judith's ashen face as he parted his lips to speak. "What's more coincidental is that these hitmen approached Vivienne before she came to the capital and informed her of everything."

He paused, a sly smile forming. "They didn't just reveal the name and family of the person who hired them to kill Vivienne; they even had a portrait."

With that, Percival unlocked his smartphone and scrolled through to reveal a hand-drawn, remarkably lifelike portrait of Judith.

The room fell silent as everyone absorbed the shocking revelation.

Timothy and Cheryl gazed at Judith in disbelief. "Mom? Is this true? How could you do such a thing?"

Their voices carried little weight in the Brooks family, especially now with Scott at the helm. They usually kept quiet on family matters.

However, they had made an effort to be helpful to Vivienne within their means out of gratitude to Karen for her past kindness.

They had initially mistaken Arabella for Karen's child and had urged the family to treat her well. Once

Vivienne returned, the children took an instant liking to her, much to their satisfaction.

As for family affairs, such as acknowledging Calista as one of their own, they had objected, but Judith and Scott were adamant. There was little they could do.

Knowing how much their mother had adored Karen, they had planned to discuss the matter with their mother if Vivienne faced any mistreatment upon Calista's return. But they could have never imagined that their mother would go so far as to order a hit on Karen's daughter.

Why would she do such a thing?

Judith's facade crumbled as she stood there, her grip tightening on her walking stick, her expression dark and menacing. "Yes, I did it! So what? Karen, a woman of dubious origins, by what right did she deserve to marry my most accomplished son? My son should have married someone of equal standing, someone who could benefit the Brooks family! But Scott was blinded by her, insistent on marrying her!"

Judith's voice was filled with venom. "I am a good mother. How could I fight with my son over a woman? So, I pretended to adore her and treated her like family. But that woman dared to cheat!"

Vivienne's brows drew together in a barely perceptible frown at those words.

Percival's expression darkened.

Timothy and his wife were in disbelief.

Scott seemed to have known all along. His hands clenched tightly by his sides, his face mirroring the storm clouds above, brewing with silent fury.

Among the younger members, Kala was the first to snap out of the shock, immediately retorting,

"Impossible! Karen is not that kind of person!"

When Karen and Scott were together, she was just a kid, but the fragments of memories she clung to painted Karen as a warm-hearted aunt. She would flash a comforting smile, shower her with quirky toys, and stand up for her when the neighborhood bullies came around.

Back in those days, her parents were always tied up with the family business, barely sparing a moment for her. The taunts and teases she endured went unnoticed by them, but Karen was the one who would rush to her defense.

That was why she just could not believe Karen was capable of the things they said.

"I saw it with my own two eyes!" Judith bellowed, her voice laced with fury, "Right there in the shadowy alley by the Brooks Mansion, they were wrapped in each other's arms, that hussy, toying with my son's heart!"

As Judith spat the words, her gaze cut to Vivienne, filled with a bitter venom. "And then you had to go and be the result of their sordid affair!"

The room erupted into an audible gasp!

Stunned faces all around!

Timothy was beside himself, exclaiming, "Mom! What are you spewing? My brother himself handled the paternity test! How could Vivienne not be his child? You can't just throw around accusations like that!"

"I'm not making this up!" Judith seethed. "She's not a true Brooks. She's the illicit child of Karen and that man!"

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Timothy was in disbelief.

He glanced at Scott and said urgently, "Come on, bro, can you please say something? Weren't you the one who got the paternity test done? We all saw the results. They confirmed without a doubt that there's a biological connection. Vivienne has been through a lot over the years, and now, with Calista

back, she's been put through the wringer again. If this turns into another wrong accusation, she's going to lose all her love for the Brooks family."

Scott turned to look at Vivienne. She sat there with the composure of a calm sea, unaffected by the astounding news.

It seemed this revelation was not even worth batting an eyelid over to her!

She was not just like Karen; she surpassed her!

Scott stayed silent for a moment, then finally spoke in a deep voice, "Mom, stop this nonsense.

Vivienne is my daughter!"

Despite the nagging feeling inside him that Vivienne might not be his biological child, the evidence was clear.

Ten paternity tests had all confirmed the relationship. And the result of the eleventh was still pending.

This time, he had employed the services of Frostfire Intelligence Agency, a globally connected organization that would surely determine whether Vivienne was indeed his daughter.

Vivienne met his eyes and smiled – a smile enigmatic and profound.



Judith, on the other hand, was panicking. "No, she isn't! I don't know why the tests show that Vivienne is your biological daughter, but I know she's not! She doesn't resemble you at all! Look at Calista – her eyebrows, eyes, nose, they all look like you!"

In fact, she had secretly commissioned several paternity tests herself.

Yet, the results still confirmed the relationship between Scott and Vivienne.

She simply could not fathom why!

Her gut told her Vivienne was not Scott's biological daughter, and her gut was rarely wrong!

This was why, when she learned Paula was planning to steal Scott's sperm for Mila, she covertly lent a hand.

A woman like Mila was far from her ideal daughter-in-law. At that time, it seemed the best course of action.

Only if Mila bore Scott's child could she drug Karen, arrange for someone to sleep with her, and drive her away.

Her plans were flawless.

But then Scott proposed to Karen!

In a fit of pique, Mila married William.

Her plans were disrupted. Judith could only watch the engagement unfold, waiting for a chance to get rid of Karen for good.

Unexpectedly, on the day of the wedding, Karen ran off.

The wedding was called off, and Judith breathed a sigh of relief. Nonetheless, she feared Karen's return, so she joined Scott in the search for her, only to discover that Karen had been pregnant when she left.

Her face darkened at that news. That child, whether Scott's or not, must never return to the Brooks family!

Despite all her schemes and defenses, she had never anticipated that Vivienne could be Karen's child!

Had she known it would come to this, she never would have insisted on sending Vivienne back to Rivenwood.

Scott glanced disdainfully at Calista, but his voice left no room for doubt, "Enough. Vivienne is my daughter, and I won't tolerate any more questioning of her identity!"

His gaze at Calista intensified with disapproval.

What good was resemblance?

Be it in intelligence, cunning, or strategy, Calista could match Vivienne in none!

Even her schemes were unveiled by Vivienne, leading to the current debacle.

Vivienne and Percival had scores to settle, and this was just the beginning. Whether it would come back to haunt Calista remained to be seen. If not for Calista's usefulness to him, he would not even glance at her.

Scott surveyed the room, his expression stern as he addressed Judith, "Mom, from now on, you're going to a church for some peace and reflection. Don't worry about the house affairs anymore. The stewardship will be handed over to your sister-in-law."

Judith's face paled. "What? You're stripping me of my stewardship?"

Scott gave her a cold look. "You're getting old. It's time for you to enjoy some tranquility."

"No!" Judith roared, "Don't think I don't know what you're up to. You're doing this all for Karen, aren't you? But I've always had your best interests at heart, Scott. Someone of Karen's background is not worthy of you!"

While she said this, she could not deny that the Karen she had underestimated had turned out to be a formidable power, her network of influence dwarfing that of ten Brooks families.

Yet, she was not willing to give in because Karen had usurped the place she intended for her chosen daughter-in-law. Not Mila, but Holly, Richard's youngest daughter.

Of course, Judith's wish for Scott to marry Holly was not out of affection for the girl, but rather, she wanted Holly to endure suffering in the Brooks family. She could only quell years of resentment by tormenting that woman's only daughter!

Alas, after that incident, Richard cut ties with Holly, who left Rivenwood, and vanished without a trace.

The Ellington family never spoke of her again.

She despised Karen, not just for her background, but because Karen had interfered with the wedding she had almost secured between Holly and Scott.

"I'll have your belongings packed and you escorted away immediately," Scott said, frowning, his face clouded with displeasure.

Such a stubborn old woman. Could she not tell he was doing her a favor?

Did she really think she, or the Brooks family, could outmaneuver Vivienne?

Karen was a force to be reckoned with, and Vivienne? There was no way she was just some Jane Doe.

She had dug up the dirt from the past; she could dig up more. No matter how powerful he was, some

skeletons just could not stay in the closet!

"Scott!" Percival said with a calm glance, his voice even-tempered, "What's the rush? We've got some

scores to settle, which are best settled with the matriarch present. Her fate isn't for you to decide."

As he finished, he turned to Vivienne, "Right, Vivienne?"

Vivienne's lips curled into a smile. "Mr. Wolf's got it spot on!"

Having someone in her corner felt pretty good! She could boldly let things fall apart!

And watch as the expressions on certain faces shifted.

It was truly a spectacle!

Yup! It was definitely more entertaining than the beefcakes Kala had her watching!

Scott furrowed his brow, turning towards Vivienne, "Vivienne..."

Before he could continue, Vivienne addressed Percival, "Mr. Wolf, let's put the gemstone debts and the

family reunion tally on the back burner for now. How about we start with Judith here and the little matter

of ten lives on her conscience?"

Her voice was languid, and across the room, Calista found her nonchalance grating.

She could not help but say, "Vivienne, that's enough! Regardless of everything, Grandma is still your elder. You're way out of line!"

Vivienne arched an eyebrow, looking toward Percival with a mischievous air. "Mr. Wolf, it seems like

Calista is itching to settle up. Shall we put Judith on hold and tally her account first?"

Percival's lips twitched into a smile. "No rush! We'll take it one step at a time. The detectives from the

Major Crimes Unit and the Vanguard Agency are waiting outside. Once we've cleared the books, they'll

be ready to provide them with a fitting destination!"

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Scott furrowed his brows, a shadow of concern darkening his expression.

It was clear to him that Percival and Vivienne were determined to bring matters to a head today.

His gaze narrowed, voice dropping to a husky whisper, "Vivienne, Percival, it seems Grandma might've

been rattled today, and Vivienne has had her fair share of grievances. Let's not dwell on the past. From

now on, she'll take some time for herself, perhaps a sabbatical. I'll see to it that no one in this household gives her any more trouble."

Kala snorted dismissively.

Who had been bullying Vivienne, anyway?

It was just him and that illegitimate daughter of his!

She and the other youngsters always got along fine with Vivienne.

Vivienne lifted her gaze, those cool and detached eyes briefly meeting Scott's before she spoke evenly,

"Your assurances mean nothing to me, Scott. If Judith wants to settle scores, let's clear the slate completely, so no one can say I took advantage of the Brooks family's generosity!"

Scott's eyes tightened, a dangerous edge creeping into his demeanor. "Are you sure this is what you want?"

Vivienne smiled, a touch of defiance in her tone. "Absolutely."

Their eyes locked, and for a moment, Scott felt an unsettling leap in his heart at her piercing gaze. He was about to respond when Vivienne turned away, her voice calm. "Mr. Wolf, I'm famished!"

"Alright," Percival said softly, "Let's get this over with and grab something to eat."

Calista bristled at their disregard for everyone else in the room, her anger boiling over. Yet, she could not shake this gnawing feeling that if she spoke now, she might just implicate herself, especially since Percival had mentioned that folks from Vanguard Agency were still outside. Despite her confidence in her innocence, who knew what kind of trap Vivienne could set for her?

She had to tread carefully. The last thing she wanted was another visit to the Vanguard Agency.

"Judith." Percival's voice suddenly turned icy as he fixed his gaze on her, sharp as an arrow, his tone as biting as frost. "Let's settle the accounts for my grandmother's death, as well as the three friends and six nannies who took care of her!"

The room fell into stunned silence, so quiet one could hear the whisper of the wind.

Judith's face drained of color, her hands trembling on her cane. Panic surged through her.

Even Scott was taken aback. Despite his experience in high-stakes situations, this revelation left him reeling.

Could it be that his mother was behind Dahlia's murder?

Impossible.



He remembered the case from years ago. It had made national headlines, and the perpetrator was never found. His mother had an alibi; she was at her father's house when the police investigated, and surveillance footage confirmed she had not left the premises.

"What?" A thunderous roar erupted from within the Brooks Mansion.

Everyone turned to see Baron, cane in hand, staggering down the stairs, shock written all over his face.

"What did you just say, Percival? Say it again!"

A family reunion had turned into a farce the day before, yet here they were again. Baron certainly did not plan to show up.

However, hearing from the servants about the conflict between Percival, Vivienne, and Judith over some unresolved matter had piqued his interest enough to observe from the balcony.

He had always been curious to see how Percival would strip away Judith's mask of deception. But he never anticipated uncovering such a startling secret.

Percival glanced at Baron, his eyes cold and unforgiving. "Are you telling me you didn't know Judith killed my grandmother?"

Baron felt as if his mind had been struck by lightning, buzzing with disbelief. Shaken, he approached

Judith, voice trembling. "No, I don't. If I knew, how could I have allowed her to live freely over the years?"

If he had known, he would be the first to kill Judith. He would make her suffer in a place worse than hell, doomed to wander the world for eternity, paying for her sins even after death.

Seeing how emotional Baron was, Percival was a little surprised. His eyes gloomy as he said, "It seems Judith is quite a master criminal. Even her husband doesn't know what she has done."

The next moment, Baron turned around and slapped Judith hard. Clenching his teeth, he glared at her with fury. "It was you! You killed her! You wench!"

Still in a daze, this slap brought Judith back to her senses.

Filled with disbelief, she held her face and looked at Baron. "You hit me again? This is the second time you've hit me ever since we got married! How could you?"

Baron retorted, "Hit you? You killed Dahlia. You should be thankful I'm not cutting your throat! Judith, you've done all kinds of malicious and evil little things, but I never cared. Never would I have expected you to kill Dahlia."

Baron, overtaken by emotion, grabbed Judith by the throat, his face twisted with rage as he roared,

"Didn't I tell you? Anything else, I could turn a blind eye, but if you dared to lay a finger on Dahlia, I'd kill you myself!"

Judith, gasping for air, tried to fend him off, but realizing the gravity of the situation, she dropped her

hands, her face pale. "After all these years, you'd believe a stranger over your wife? I despised her,

sure, but murder? That's a death sentence. If it was me, why haven't the police arrested me all these

years? Why is it only now, with Percival's accusation, that this comes to light? He just can't stand to see

the Brooks family prosper!"

Baron hesitated. She had a point. If she was behind it, how could the police have failed to uncover the

truth after all these years?

Percival could not help but crack a hollow laugh that did not seem out of joy at all. "Now that's an

excellent question," He said, his voice laced with a chilling mirth.

As his words hung in the air, he slowly rose to his feet and strolled over to Judith. "Since we're settling

scores," he said, his tone frosty, "Let's make everything crystal clear so you don't end up six feet under

with a grudge."

Judith met his icy gaze with mounting panic. Suddenly overwhelmed, she blurted out, "Shut up! What

scores? The Brooks family owes you nothing! We don't want you here, so get the hell out!"

"Who dare kick him out?" Baron snapped as he brushed past Judith, his voice a low growl. "This has to

be settled! I want it all laid out, down to every detail. I need to know who took Dahlia's life!"

Without missing a beat, Baron pulled out his phone and dialed Richard's number. "We need to get

Richard in on this, clear the air once and for all," He said with a steely resolve.

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Percival had never intended to summon Richard, but since Baron wanted Richard there, he had no

objections.

The tale of his grandparents and Baron was something he had heard since he was a child. His

grandmother had been pivotal to both men.

If they wanted to settle old scores, Percival was willing to let them.

Upon hearing that Percival had unearthed the murderer of the dear old lady, Richard dropped

everything and bolted over to the Brooks Mansion.

Bursting through the door, he was brimming with urgency. "Percival! Baron just told me over the phone

that you found out who killed your grandma. Is it true?"

With a nod and a knowing glance at Thomas, Percival affirmed, "Yeah. Take a seat. We'll get to the bottom of this."

Thomas dragged over a chair, and Richard plopped down eagerly. "Alright! Let's see who murdered your grandma. Just give me a name, and I'll break their damn kneecaps!"

His gaze purposefully swept towards Judith.

Baron had hinted over the phone that Judith was tied up in this mess.

Richard settled in, but Baron did not have anyone to fetch him a chair. So, he grabbed one himself and sat down.

Percival scanned the room, pulled out his smartphone, and handed it to Thomas. "Project this."

His phone had a built-in projector, a feature Thomas had used countless times. He quickly set it up.

"Open this photo," Percival instructed Thomas, then turned to Judith. "After the tragedy with my grandma, the police locked down the scene. You, being her close friend, were interrogated. This was your statement from back then."

The statement seemed clear-cut, leaving no room for suspicion.

All evidence pointed to Judith having an alibi.

The crowd was puzzled, turning to Percival, wondering what a flawless statement could possibly reveal.

Sensing their confusion, Percival spoke calmly, "This statement is perfect. Too perfect, in fact. But..."

His eyes lifted, locking onto Judith, "In your testimony, you said you hadn't left your home for three days around the time of Grandma's dinner party. Witnesses confirmed that. So then... Who is this?"

Thomas flicked to the next photo.

Judith went pale.

How could this be?

She had covered her tracks perfectly. How had Percival gotten hold of this photo?

Shock rippled through the crowd, their gazes shifting towards Judith.

Richard exploded instantly. "You sneaky witch, Judith! It was you! I'll kill you!"

He lunged at Judith, but Thomas was quick to intercept. "Calm down. Let's get the full story first."

Judith forced herself to remain composed, countering, "What does this photo prove? I was merely out

for some shopping."

"Shopping, my foot!" Richard bellowed. "You expect us to believe you traveled over a hundred miles to some podunk town for shopping? What business does a lady of your stature have there? That's where Dahlia and her friends were dining!"

The mention of the incident nearly sent Richard over the edge.

Back in the day, Dahlia and her three closest girlfriends had planned a special dinner out of town. They had grown tired of the local Rivenwood cuisine and craved something new. Somehow, they settled on this little town with a rumored fantastic hole-in-the-wall restaurant. Richard had questioned the choice, having never heard of the place, but Dahlia showed him an ad from the newspaper.

At that time, before the internet era, newspapers were their source of information. After verifying the restaurant's reputation and learning about a nearby church said to be powerful, they booked their visit on the fourteenth, planning to stay overnight and visit the church on the fifteenth. Dahlia was quite superstitious, so she was very interested in attending church.

Each girl was accompanied by a nanny for safety, and Richard, being extra cautious, assigned three to Dahlia.

Only after assuring their safety did he allow Dahlia to go.

But tragedy struck that evening - a fire claimed the lives of ten people!

By the time Richard arrived, Dahlia, her friends, and the nannies were unrecognizable.

The devastation was incomprehensible.

The investigation cleared the restaurant owner but concluded it was intentional arson. Yet, the culprit remained elusive.

Twenty years had passed, and the pain was as fresh as ever.

"How was I supposed to know where they were dining? They didn't even invite me!" Judith spat out, exasperated.

"Really?" Percival's voice dropped an octave, his eyes narrowing. "And what about this?"

Thomas switched to the next photo.

It showed a call from Judith's family landline to Dahlia, made by Judith.

Judith was flabbergasted.

That was impossible.



She had already...

Before she could react, Percival stepped towards her. "Surprised? You paid a fortune to erase this record. So, how did I find it?"

Back then, recovering deleted call records was nearly impossible with rudimentary technology.

But today, it had been child's play for Percival and Vivienne to retrieve the lost data.

Judith stumbled backward, overwhelmed by his presence. "No, it wasn't me. I didn't make that call!"

"Judith." Thomas's voice was as cold as the steel of a blade, "Not only did Percival uncover the calls you've been making to our dear old lady, but he also traced the newspaper article you pointed her to.

Even the accusations from the owner of that restaurant and this snapshot a passerby took of you heading to the village. Every piece, every bit of it, ties back to you."

Judith remained defiantly silent, refusing to admit anything.

"If you want to keep playing innocent, that's fine. We have ways of digging up the past," Thomas said, his words hanging in the air like a threat.

Percival glanced at Judith and took a step toward her, his presence imposing. "Still no confession? Do you really want me to lay all the evidence out in front of you?"

Baron stood up as well, his voice rising in anger. "You wicked woman! Even now, you persist with your lies! Tell me, did you or did you not kill Dahlia?"

Faced with the barrage of accusing eyes and Baron's interrogation, Judith could no longer hold back.

With a roar of fury, she confessed, "So what if I did it? She deserved to die! That tramp, she was nothing compared to me, yet she had all the men wrapped around her finger. You were married to me, but she was always the one on your mind."

Judith's words grew more heated as she spoke. "I thought time would make you forget her, but no, even after Ronald was born, you still couldn't let her go! Baron Brooks, you're a grandfather, for heaven's sake, and yet you're still obsessed with that tramp. I hated her; she deserved a thousand deaths!"

Her expression twisted into a sinister smile. "So, yes, I decided to kill her, to burn her until she was unrecognizable. I wanted you to remember her as hideous, but, oh... Even in that state, you couldn't let her go."

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As soon as Judith's venomous confession left her lips, the Brooks family was struck dumb. A stunned

silence filled the room, broken only by the clock ticking against the mahogany walls. No one could have imagined that Judith, the seemingly gentle and kind-hearted matron of the Brooks family, harbored such darkness in her soul.

Murder, born from the seeds of jealousy? And not just one, but ten lives snuffed out?

Baron, shaking with a barely contained rage, erupted. "You! You vile woman! Dahlia always treated you like a friend, and this is how you repay her!"

Judith's twisted sneer was like a knife. "Friend? My dear Baron, I played the doting friend just to witness her fall from grace. It's a pity, though..."

Her gaze shifted to Richard, her lips curling into a self-mocking smile. "Richard loved her too much. No matter my plots, he always stood by Dahlia, even when I drugged her, never once did he doubt her fidelity!"

She turned back to Baron, her eyes glinting with malice. "See? This is why she chose him over you.

You would've never trusted her if you had been in his shoes."

Baron growled, "Bullshit! Dahlia was flawless in my eyes. I would always stand by her, no matter what."

Judith's laugh was a bitter sound that cut through the room. "After all these years, I've toiled for this

family, yet your heart never held a place for me. Even now, you sing Dahlia's praises. But what good does that do? She's dead! I burned her beyond recognition. And her friends? They're gone, too, casualties of her downfall. Ha!"

Her laughter devolved into unhinged cackles. "You're here to settle scores? To what end? Your so-called evidence can't pin anything on me. Even knowing I'm the murderer, you're powerless, Baron. Your hatred changes nothing. You'll still have to face me every day."

"You!" Baron, furious, swung at her, but Judith caught his wrist with a strength that belied her appearance. "You think I'm helpless? If not for my love for you, the things you've done to me would have sealed your fate ten times over!"

With a swift movement, she threw Baron to the ground.

Ronald, close by, rushed to help Baron back to his feet. As Baron stood, he looked at Judith in shock.

"You know how to fight?"

The irony was not lost on him. He had prided himself on being perceptive, yet he had never suspected her of such fighting skills. She had indeed played her part well.

Judith leaned on her cane, her expression icy. "One needs to know a little self-defense in the Brooks family or be left to wither. Since you despise me so, from now on, you'll stay put in this house. If you're to die, you'll die looking at me."

Baron, speechless, received only a dismissive glance from Judith as she turned to Richard. "Richard, the Brooks family no longer welcomes you. Take your grandson and leave my house. As for Percival and Vivienne's engagement..."

Her gaze landed on Vivienne, a cruel smile on her lips. "The paternity test might say Scott's the father, but I don't buy it. Step out of line, and you'll find no place in the Brooks family. But since you're now carrying a Brooks heir, you'll abide by our rules. Your marriage to Percival? I don't recognize it."

"Don't take my words lightly. I'm not an idiot like Beatrice. Feel free to try, but thread lightly." Judith tossed her cane aside, adjusting her hair with an air of finality. "I've played this charade for years. It's liberating to drop the act."

Percival and Vivienne could not help but laugh at the spectacle, looking at Judith like looking at an idiot.

In the face of her unraveling, Judith's composure was almost admirable, certainly a step above the naivety of Beatrice.

Percival, hands in his pockets, raised an eyebrow. "Vivienne, got everything on tape?"

Vivienne's smile was sly. "Every word."

She played back the recording of Judith's confession with a triumphant glint in her eye. "We've got all we need."

Judith's rage erupted. "You tricked me?"

She had let her guard down, her rage toward Baron blinding her to the threat of modern technology.

She had believed their evidence insufficient but had not counted on being baited.

Percival's smile widened. "Why bother with a lengthy investigation when the culprit hands you the evidence on a silver platter? This recording is all we need to bring you to justice. Looks like your little fantasy is over."

Finding evidence about a crime so many years ago was difficult. Back then, Percival was still young, and he had mistaken Judith for a kind and gentle lady. Plus, given the limited technology back then and the fact that Judith took extra caution in cleaning her tracks, no one ever suspected her, including him.

The suspicions about Judith began when she insisted that Calista tutor Thaddeus. It was then that he

and Vivienne had their eureka moment.

They had always felt there was something off about Judith, so they delved into a thorough investigation.

Even with today's advanced technology, digging up evidence from years ago was no easy feat.

Together, he and Vivienne had managed to restore a key piece of evidence – a phone call from the past.

As for the photographs, he had faked them. The owner of the local restaurant where the original photos were taken had passed away years ago.

Other than the phone call, there was no solid proof linking Judith to the untimely death of their grandmother.

That was when Vivienne suggested a bold move – to corner Judith into confessing the truth herself.

Ah!

Vivienne was indeed a clever woman!

The strategy worked like a charm!

Percival gave Thomas a knowing look, who discreetly tapped his hidden earpiece and ordered, "Arrest

her!"

Within moments, a swarm of law enforcement burst through the doors.

The lead officer approached Judith directly. "Ma'am, you are a suspect in a homicide case. Please come with us for questioning."

Judith's face paled. "No! I won't go!"

Not waiting for a response, she lashed out, trying to find an opening to escape.

#### Chapter 376

Judith had been out of the game for years, her skills rusty but her foundation solid. She had kept the violence of her past tucked away like old photographs in an attic, but now, as she faced the detectives of the Major Crimes Unit, it seemed fate had a cruel sense of humor.

The detectives, armed but bound by protocol not to shoot without orders, could only attempt to apprehend Judith with their bare hands.

Judith was fluid in her movements, and every strike was deliberate. However, unarmed, her attacks lacked lethal force. She sought only an opportunity to flee, to avoid paying the ultimate price for a life she no longer claimed.



Percival and Vivienne watched with icy detachment as Judith grappled with the officers.

After a moment, Percival's gaze shifted to Thomas, who understood the silent command. He drew his gun and, with a chilling indifference, fired a single shot that pierced Judith's temple instantly.

Judith fell, her eyes wide in disbelief as she fixed them on Thomas, her voice whispering of betrayal.

"You, you... How could you?"

Thomas holstered his weapon, his voice colder than his expression. "Judith Brooks, a fugitive for twenty years, assaulted officers in her attempt to escape justice. Her threat to public safety has been neutralized."

The Brooks family gasped in horror at the scene before them. Despite their influence, they had never witnessed such a brazen act of violence, much less against the matriarch of their household.

Kala and others screamed and rushed forward while Timothy and Cheryl stood frozen, unable to process the sight of their mother, once vibrant and alive, now lifeless before them. Their legs shook as they stared at Judith's cold body on the ground.

"How dare you!" Scott roared. "You dare spill blood in the Brooks household? Who gave you the authority to take my mother's life? Do you think there's nothing I can do about this?"

Having just recovered from the shock, laced with outrage, Timothy said, "This is outrageous! Even if she was guilty, we have laws. You've denied her life without due process. This is an abuse of power!"

Although he agreed that Judith should be punished for taking ten lives, she was his mother, after all. He could not accept the fact that his mother was shot down like that without even having the chance to negotiate in court.

The command from Scott was swift. "Surround the mansion! No one leaves today. We'll see who gets away with murder on my watch."

As Scott reached for his phone to dial the emergency hotline, the detectives who had been standing moments before crumpled to the ground, writhing in pain.

His call was cut short by the sight of Vivienne, from whom silver needles seemed to have flown with deadly accuracy. And as predicted, doctors and nurses in white coats rushed in to tend to the fallen officers, declaring severe injuries.

The lead doctor's words were like a death knell. "Who dared attack these officers?"

Scott seethed, knowing the implications. An assault on law enforcement could spell the end for the

Brooks family.

However, before he could respond, agents from the Vanguard Agency stormed the mansion. Like a mouse spotted by a cat, Calista immediately hid behind Mila.

The agents ignored their pleas, their leader commanding, "For assaulting officers and endangering national security, you're all under arrest!"

Scott's expression darkened. He had underestimated Percival and Vivienne, and now the Brooks family faced their reckoning.

Kala and the others, usually fearless, were now shaking with terror. Ashley's cries for mercy went unheeded.

"Vivienne, you witnessed everything. Tell them we're innocent!" Kala pleaded.

As the agents began to detain the family, Vivienne's eyes held a glint of something unreadable.

Baron, meanwhile, aged a decade in seconds, slumped into a chair, a wordless witness to the chaos.

Scott's fury rose when he saw Baron's resignation.

However, the Brooks family was in a much more dire situation right now.

Thus, instead of speaking out rashly, he decided to ponder and analyze the situation first.

Compared to the astounding achievement he was about to accomplish, his mother's death was

insignificant. Nonetheless, he could not accept letting Percival off so easily.

Having witnessed the change of expressions on Scott's face, Vivienne showed a hint of disdain.

She glanced at the Brooks siblings, who were quivering with fear, and frowned. Then, she turned to

Percival and spoke with a subtle nod. "Mr. Wolf, it's time."

Percival glanced at the Brooks siblings, returned the nod, and said to Vivienne, "Okay."

As his words fell, he turned to the leader of the Vanguard Agency and said, "Judith has been

apprehended and neutralized on the spot. The rest of the Brooks family did not assault the officers."

The team leader did not say much, just bellowed, "Pack it up, folks!"

But after the call to regroup, they did not leave. They were waiting for Percival's following command.

Vivienne approached the detectives, gave a cursory inspection, and nonchalantly confiscated a silver

needle.

The team quickly resumed action, and the team leader ordered his people to take away Judith's body.

Once they had left, Percival said to Thomas, "Go submit the mission report!"

There had been no breach of protocol today. He was the captain of the Vanguard Agency, authorized to neutralize any threat to national security.

Nonetheless, every mission had to be reported to the state.

The Brooks household soon regained its calm.

The Brooks siblings looked at Percival completely differently now.

Although they had known he was no pushover, they never imagined he possessed such formidable power.

Seeing the turn of events, Calista felt her nerves on edge and quickly made an excuse. "It looks like today's party won't be happening. Dad, I'm feeling unwell. I'm going to go upstairs."

At her words, Kala and the others turned a shade of green with annoyance.

Their grandmother had just died, yet she was still thinking about the party?

Though deserved, the matriarch of the Brooks family had passed, and there were funerary matters to attend to!

Percival glanced at her coolly, his stern face showing no emotion.

Thomas seemed to understand his cue and gave the Vanguard agents a knowing look.

Quickly, the team leader stepped in Calista's path and said, "Come with us!"

#### Chapter 377

Calista's heart hammered against her chest as the formidable agents from Vanguard Agency closed in around her. Memories of that claustrophobic interrogation room flooded her mind, and panic spread like

wildfire through her veins.

She took an involuntary step back, her voice trembling as much as her body. "I...I thought you cleared me. I had nothing to do with that virus. Why are you taking me in again?"

She was terrified.

The thought of being back in that room was unbearable.

The team leader's face was a stone mask of seriousness as he said, "You are suspected of attempted murder against the captain of Vanguard Agency. You're coming with us under the law."

He presented the arrest warrant.

Calista's eyes nearly popped out of her skull. "What are you talking about? When did I ever attempt to murder the captain of Vanguard Agency? I was after..."

She had meant to target Vivienne. How could Vivienne be the captain of Vanguard Agency?

The leader remained unflappable. "Percival Ellington is our captain, and you positioned that rebar to kill

Captain Ellington with premeditation. You're coming with us."

"What!" Calista and the entire Brooks clan were stunned.

Percival was the captain of Vanguard Agency!

Whoever called him a loser was dead wrong. Could a loser helm the elite Vanguard Agency squad?

Standing at a distance, Scott's eyes narrowed. Percival's identity had caught him off guard; he had been so focused on Vivienne that he had overlooked this guy.

"No, I didn't..." Calista's panic resurfaced as she faced the leader, but before she could plead her case, she was whisked away by two armed agents.

Mila wanted to intervene, but the sight of the Vanguard Agency's operatives withered her resolve.

Once the agency's team had departed, the Brooks Mansion returned to its eerie calm.

Richard rose slowly from his chair, his gaze cutting through Baron's dazed state. "You always said you were better than me, always trying to one-up me. But what do you have over me, apart from your taste in women? What kind of person have you married? How could you not see her true, wicked nature?"

Baron slumped into his chair, for once not countering Richard's words.

Richard could not care less. "Though it wasn't by my hand, Judith got what she deserved. I need to light a candle for Dahlia and share the news with her."

At that, Baron stood abruptly. "I'll go with you!"

Richard grunted in response and left. Baron quickly followed.

The rest of the Brooks family was slowly coming to terms with the situation.

The bloodshed visibly shook Kala and her siblings.

Scott and Timothy were silent, not a word between them.

It was Ronald who first regained his composure. "We should start planning the funeral arrangements."

Though the police had taken the body, it would need to be returned sooner or later.

No matter what Judith had done, they were her family, and it was their duty to see to her last rites.

Scott finally looked up, his voice grave as he instructed Ronald, "See to it."

Then, turning to Vivienne, he said, "We need to talk. In private. Come to the room."

His face betrayed none of the sorrow of losing a mother.

Vivienne glanced at him coldly. "We'll talk, but not now."



She approached Kala, and her lips pressed into a thin line. "Do you blame me?"

Vivienne had never felt a kinship with the Brooks family. Her quest was solely to unearth the truth behind her mother's death. She was not one to show mercy in her dealings, and the Brooks family was no exception. She had never intended to stay.

Yet, for Kala and the others who had stood by her, she harbored a different sentiment. Even if their help was unneeded, she could not bring herself to be callous to those who showed her kindness. As people said, only one with a cruel heart could achieve great success in life, and she was not one of them.

Kala, tears welling in her eyes, struggled to speak. Finally, she mustered a wry smile. "Morally, I don't blame you. Judith killed ten people; she deserved to pay for her crimes. But on a personal level, I can't understand. She was your grandmother, too. Even if she was guilty, you could've reported her to the police. Instead, she was killed on the spot."

Kala sobbed, her voice breaking. "I don't know how to go on. Everyone in this house has changed, hiding behind masks. I can't stay here anymore. I'm leaving."

With that, she turned and ran.

Vivienne's gaze softened briefly before she looked at Ronald and the others. "Blame me if you must.

Wrongdoers must always pay the price for their actions. No one escapes justice."

With these final words, she left with Percival.

Hours later, the Rivenwood Police Department announced the resolution of the decade-old case of the ten people killed in a fire. The culprit was identified as Judith Brooks from the Brooks family. She had resisted arrest, attacked law enforcement, and was fatally shot in the confrontation.

Though the police had not intended to go public, the incident at the Brooks estate had attracted attention, and Judith's body had been seen by many as it was removed from the premises. Soon, the internet was ablaze with commentary and speculation.

Judith had everyone fooled. To the public, she was the sweet old lady with a heart of gold, the kind of grandmotherly figure who would be the first to bake a batch of cookies for the local fire department or knit scarves for the homeless come winter. So, when the news broke out that she was gunned down in broad daylight, the internet was in an uproar, demanding answers and justice on her behalf.

The police had no choice but to release a statement.

The moment the statement hit the web, it was like dropping a bombshell at a Sunday barbecue.

[Judith, a murderer? Are you kidding me? She's the kindest soul around. There's no way she could hurt

a fly! She must have crossed paths with some high and mighty bigwig, and this is what she gets?

RivenwoodPD, you guys owe Judith the truth!]

[I'm standing up for Judith! Even Mrs. Brooks, the sweet old bird from the renowned Brooks family, isn't

safe from being a scapegoat. What chance do the rest of us stand? RivenwoodPD, we demand a

straight answer, or we'll seek justice for her!]

[Holy smokes! Are some of you blind? Can't you see this case is as old as the hills? This woman killed

people and hid behind a facade of charity for twenty years, and you all bought her act of kindness? I

knew right from the get-go something was off about her.]

[Yeah! The statement is from the RivenwoodPD. Who the heck has enough clout to make them their

personal umbrella? If Mrs. Brooks was innocent, why hasn't anyone from the Brooks family come

forward? Don't any of you have a brain?]

The online community was split down the middle.

Some believed in the old lady's innocence, while others put their faith in the Rivenwood Police

Department.

The controversy grew so heated that the RivenwoodPD finally decided to lay all their cards on the table and release the evidence.

#### Chapter 378

The online community was in an uproar when the police released evidence incriminating Judith. Her once-loyal supporters fell into a stunned silence, quickly drowned out by a chorus of angry voices.

Emotions ran high as people flooded the Brooks Corporation's official website with vitriol, and the personal social media accounts of every member of the Brooks family were bombarded with harsh comments.

Kala and Darren, both celebrities, saw their careers take a massive hit as endorsement deals and acting roles evaporated overnight. Companies severed ties, leading roles were recast, and they faced the grim prospect of paying hefty breach-of-contract fines.

The Brooks Corporation's stock plummeted as the scandal unfolded.

Families of Dahlia's friends, who had perished alongside her, led online campaigns against the Brooks, who became pariahs, struggling to navigate the storm of public outrage.

Stepping outside became a challenge for the Brooks family. In the end, it was Ronald who slipped out

to discreetly purchase funeral items for a simple service at home for Judith. But when it came time to transport her body for cremation, they found the mansion besieged, unable to move past the crowd.

...

In Percival's downtown loft, Vivienne sat with Dorian, Cordelia, and Thaddeus, all glued to the live broadcast of the Brooks' predicament.

Thaddeus had been staying with Percival since before the family reunion, and since leaving the Brooks mansion, Vivienne had not looked back.

Watching the chaos unfold on TV, Thaddeus turned to Vivienne, his confusion apparent. "Sis, did Judith really kill these people?"

Vivienne had been the one to introduce Thaddeus to Charlotte, who had helped stabilize his emotions with her tutoring. As a result, Thaddeus was largely sheltered from the darker aspects of life and had little understanding of death and violence.

Gently patting his head, Vivienne softly confirmed, "Yes, she did."

"But why did they have to shoot her? Her death will make the family sad," Thaddeus questioned,

innocence in his wide eyes.

Vivienne pressed her lips together, her voice still gentle. "She made a mistake, and death was the price she had to pay."

It was unknown if Thaddeus understood, but he looked at the exhausted appearance of Kala and her family on the screen and said with empathy, "Kala must be sad, right?"

Vivienne followed his sight and looked at the TV, too.

On the screen, the Brooks family was attempting to drive Judith's body to the crematorium, only to be encircled by a furious mob at the gates of their mansion. Vegetables and eggs were thrown; paint was splattered.

No one, not even Kala and Ashley, shielded by Ronald, was spared. Kala's hair was yanked, leaving her disheveled and her clothes torn.

It was almost impossible to adapt to such a colossal change so quickly. Like a walking corpse, Kala walked behind Ronald, head lowered, letting the crowd push her around as they wished.

Vivienne's expression changed slightly, her expression challenging to read.

While witnessing the scene, Cordelia expressed her concern for Vivienne, saying, "Vivienne..."

Vivienne knew exactly what Cordelia was about to say and replied preemptively, "Mr. Wolf will deal with

it once he's done with his stuff."

Percival was busy in his study, dealing with the fallout from the Judith scandal, which had unraveled a tangle of cases and drawn scrutiny from the higher-ups.

The higher-ups had ordered him to let go of Calista without explaining the reason behind it, and

Percival was now dealing with this matter.

Listening to Vivienne's confident response, Cordelia felt reassured. She said, "It's not your fault. Judith deserved it. Don't put too much pressure on yourself. Kala and the others will surely understand."

She knew Vivienne well enough to understand that she often took on more than she should. Despite her tough exterior, Vivienne had a soft spot for people who treated her kindly. Although Vivienne had never verbally expressed it, Judith knew she cared about Kala. After all, Kala had always been kind to her since she joined the Brooks family.

"Alright," Vivienne replied with a smile.

Dorian sighed. "The once-glorious Brooks family... Now in ruins."

Initially, he thought Judith's crime was an isolated incident that would not affect the Brooks family as a whole. But the public backlash had been fierce, proving too much for even the prestigious Brooks dynasty, the second wealthiest in Rivenwood.

"The Brooks family won't fall," Vivienne said calmly, causing Dorian to pause and wonder.

"You want to help them?" He asked.

Vivienne smiled mysteriously and replied, "They don't need my help."

She did not plan to help the Brooks family. In fact, she even wanted to completely wipe them out at the beginning. However, she had changed her mind because of Kala. She had once planned to lend a helping hand when the Brooks family was about to collapse for the sake of Kala. Now, however, she knew very well that the Brooks family would not fall with Scott around.

Dorian had no idea what Vivienne's response meant.

Just then, Percival emerged from his study, glanced at the TV where the crowd was assailing the Brooks family, and assured Vivienne that someone was already handling the situation.

Vivienne nodded, her lips pressing into a thin line. She offered no more words.



Roughly twenty minutes later, a fleet of police cruisers rolled up to the Brooks Mansion, lights flashing in the dusk. Officers swarmed the premises, apprehending the crowd that had breached the Brooks family's sanctuary, strictly prohibiting any further violent intentions.

With the law's intervention, the Brooks were able to smoothly depart and make their way to the crematorium with Judith's remains.

Once the situation had settled, Vivienne switched off the TV.

She noticed Percival lurking at the edge of the room, evidently itching to speak. Thus, she stood up and approached him, asking, "What's up?"

Percival cast a glance at Dorian and Cordelia before murmuring, "Let's talk inside."

Some matters were not meant for all ears.

Vivienne nodded, following him into the study.

"The word from above is we have to release Calista," Percival stated bluntly as they entered the quiet of the study.

Vivienne furrowed her brow. "Whose orders?"

"No idea." Percival grimaced. "Just that it's a directive from the higher-ups."

Leaning against the wall, Vivienne let out a scoff. "Quite the long arm they've got."

"There are things I can't be seen meddling in," Percival muttered under his breath.

Vivienne shot him an amused look, her lips curling into a smirk. "Alright, you handle it."

A ghost of a smile flickered across Percival's stern features. "There's no one who gets me quite like you do, Vivienne."

With a chuckle, Vivienne teased, "Your thoughts are practically painted on your face, Mr. Wolf."

Percival cleared his throat with a feigned cough. "Ah, you've got me there."

After a moment of light-hearted banter, Vivienne's expression sobered. "We can't release Calista just yet. How long can you delay?"

"One day," Percival said after a breath.

Vivienne paused, considering. "I need two days."

Percival pressed his lips, conceding after a moment. "Vivienne, one day is the most I can offer. If she's not released by tomorrow night, I'll be stripped of my position, and all our hard work will be for naught."

His position was not what mattered to him.

What mattered was the network of allies he had built. If he lost his station, those he had spent eight years positioning within the GTO would be in jeopardy.

He was not afraid to die. But he feared for the lives of the men and women who had been through hell and back with him.

Vivienne mused briefly before saying, "Then it's a race against time to see who's quicker on their feet,

me or Mr. B."

#### Chapter 379

Out in the suburbs, nestled among the rolling green hills, stood a grand villa. Rowan and Ismene, disguised as the Dorian and Cordelia, hurried to the place, urgency etched on their faces.

Inside the living room, Mr. B lounged on a plush sofa, a glass of fine red wine in hand, his silver mask catching the light and shimmering mysteriously.

Exchanging a quick, knowing glance, Rowan and Ismene approached. "Mr. B."

Mr. B's eyes lifted slightly, offering them a cursory glance. "It's been a while. Still no sign of the potion?"

"Ever since Vivienne's probing last time, we've been cautious about making our next move. We've mentioned the potion to her, but she's tight-lipped," Rowan said, trying to maintain composure.  
"Ismene

and I have been busy setting up a fragrance company. It's starting to take shape. Yesterday, Vivienne handed over the perfume formula."

Following Vivienne's instructions, they had been staying with the Brooks, but their presence was to be minimal.

They were mostly outside, occupied with the company's business.

They had to proceed with the company as planned to avoid arousing Mr. B's suspicions, which naturally slowed progress.

Lately, Vivienne had them stay at the company they were supposedly setting up, and they had been nearly absent from the Brooks Mansion for about a month.

Their occasional visits were brief, with little conversation, and they left soon after meals.

During this time, Mr. B had not reached out to them at all.

They were anxious to resolve this matter and get the antidote for the poison coursing through their veins. The excruciating pain when the poison flared was unbearable. They needed to conclude this business and secure the antidote soon.

Therefore, Rowan had repeatedly asked Vivienne whether they should contact Mr. B to find his

whereabouts.

But Vivienne had told them it was unnecessary; she had her plans.

So, they could only wait.

Recently, Mr. B had suddenly sent a message summoning them, and after informing Vivienne, they were allowed to come.

"Really?" Mr. B raised an eyebrow. "You've secured the perfume formula?"

"Yes." Rowan handed over the formula Vivienne had given him. "Take a look. Does this contain the components of the potion?"

Mr. B took the formula, glanced at it, and suddenly, his eyes narrowed, and he stood up abruptly, shock written all over his face!

Rowan inquired cautiously, noting his reaction, "Mr. B? Is there a problem with the formula?"

He was only responsible for the disguise and acquiring the potion.

However, he was not clear on the actual components of the potion.

As for what Vivienne had given him, he was even more in the dark.

Seeing Mr. B's reaction, he was puzzled and feared that Vivienne might be setting him up to be eliminated by Mr. B.

"No problem!" Mr. B stated firmly, "This is the potion!"

"What?" Both Rowan and Ismene were stunned.

This was the real potion?

No way!

Was Vivienne not supposed to capture Mr. B?

Why would she give him the real potion?

Rowan felt confused and overwhelmed.

Quickly regaining his composure, he covered his emotions and said, "It seems Vivienne's mother actually included the potion components in the perfume formula. Had we known, we would have disguised ourselves and come earlier to acquire the potion smoothly."

Mr. B's gaze was inscrutable, and after a moment, he asked, "How are Dorian and Cordelia?"

"They're under Quincy's watch, and everything appears normal," Rowan replied.

"Once you deal with them, withdraw from the Brooks family," Mr. B ordered coldly.

Rowan's eyes flickered. "Understood."

After a pause, he asked, "What about Quincy?"

"I'll assign her a new task," Mr. B replied.

Rowan nodded, said no more, and left with Ismene.

After their departure, Mr. B stared at the formula in his hands, his gaze deep and contemplative.

Half an hour later, Rowan and Ismene rushed back in just as Mr. B prepared to leave the villa.

"Mr. B, bad news! Dorian and Cordelia have been rescued!" Rowan exclaimed with urgency.

Mr. B's expression darkened, "What happened?"

"I'm not entirely sure. Quincy called, saying a group of well-trained intruders had stormed in. They

didn't utter a word before engaging in a fight. They were armed, and Quincy didn't want to risk exposing

our people infiltrated in Rivenwood, so no shots were fired. Dorian and his wife were taken away

without incident."

"Fools!" Mr. B roared in anger.

Rowan was frantic, "What do we do now? If Dorian and Cordelia reappear, our cover will be blown."

Mr. B's face was grim as he thought momentarily and ordered, "Withdraw! Notify Quincy to evacuate our people from Rivenwood immediately!"

"Understood."

Rowan was about to leave when Ismene suddenly added, "If Vivienne's people are the rescuers, it might be too late to withdraw now. Even this place could be compromised soon."

"Save whoever we can," Mr. B said sternly.

Without further discussion, Rowan and Ismene left.

...

Brooks Mansion.

After police intervention, the crowd blocking the Brooks' gates had dispersed, but the online backlash against the family was still intense.

Besides attending to Judith's cremation, no one from the Brooks family had stepped outside.

In the somber drawing room of the Brooks family estate, the air was heavy with tension.

At the head of the room sat Baron, patriarch of the Brooks clan, his presence as rigid and commanding as his posture.



His sons, Scott and Timothy, sat on either side of him while the younger generation sat in less prominent seats.

With a calm glance over his kin, Baron's voice broke the silence. "Effective immediately, Scott will be relieved of his duties as head of the family business. I shall take the reins. Cheryl will handle the household affairs. Timothy and Ronald, you two are responsible for keeping the company staff in line. Kala, I'm afraid your career in show business is over. You might as well come back to the business and help your father and brother with the company's affairs."

At this, Kala protested, "Grandpa! Acting is my passion, my love. I don't want to give it up. Even if the glory days are behind me, I'd be happy to play just a minor role."

Baron was silent for a moment before responding, "You are my eldest granddaughter, and I have always supported you in whatever you choose to do. However, the backlash from this incident has been severe. We're not even talking about your acting career; the settlement alone might be more than the Brooks family can handle right now."

Kala pressed her lips together, choosing silence.

Over the years, through her hard work, she had won prestigious awards and earned a considerable fortune.

As a celebrated actress, endorsements and gigs had come to her in waves.

Her schedule was booked solid through to the end of the following year.

While abundant resources were a boon, a fall from grace meant a more significant loss.

The money she had earned was nowhere near enough to cover the settlements.

And with the family company's stock plummeting and numerous partners severing ties, the Brooks family was in a crisis of their own.

She was at a loss for what to do next.

Then, a cool, detached voice unexpectedly filled the room, "I've settled your breach of contract penalty.

You can continue to pursue what you love."

Chapter 380

Everyone looked up as Vivienne walked in, her pace slow and measured. Clad in a plain tee and jeans, the simplicity of her attire was offset by the icy expression that seemed permanently etched onto her delicate features.

Kala watched her, emotions churning within her.

After a moment, she spoke up, "No need. I'll handle it myself."

She was at a loss for how to treat Vivienne now.

After all, it was not Vivienne who had affected her work, but there was an undeniable discomfort

whenever she saw Vivienne.

Did she blame Vivienne?

No.

After all, her grandmother had genuinely committed murder, and not just once, but tenfold.

For twenty years, the families of the victims had been deprived of the truth.

Her grandmother's fate was deserved.

She just could not face Vivienne.

It seemed ever since Vivienne's return, everyone she was close to had changed.

Vivienne approached her, her face serious. "Judith's death was a consequence of her actions. If she

hadn't resisted arrest, she wouldn't have been shot in front of you. And the media exposure you faced

wasn't my doing. I covered your penalty fees as a gesture of goodwill. You were the only one who

treated me with genuine kindness after I joined the Brooks family."

When the Brooks first took her in, everyone had been considerate, but there was always an ulterior motive.

Only Kala had been genuinely kind to her.

That was just how Vivienne was unable to ignore those who were sincerely kind to her.

Even though this incident was somewhat related to her, she was not responsible for the outcome.

She could assist Kala, but she would never blame herself for what had happened!

Kala stared at Vivienne, unsure of what to say.

Ever since Vivienne had come back, she had been a woman of few words, never using two where one would suffice. But today, she had spoken at length.

Without another word, Vivienne walked over to Baron and stated flatly, "Baron, I'm here to pack up. I won't be staying at the Brooks household any longer."

Baron scoffed, "What, you think you can just bail when the going gets tough? I'm not dead yet. Even in hard times, I wouldn't let my granddaughter fend for herself."

He sighed, his tone softening, "This isn't on you. Even if it weren't you and Percival, I wouldn't have

spared her. This case... Richard and I have been investigating it in the shadows for years. If we had discovered the truth sooner, perhaps the Brooks family wouldn't have ended up like this."

Vivienne raised an eyebrow, genuinely surprised.

"Stay put, and don't worry about anything else," Baron said with finality. "We're discussing the future of the Brooks family. You should listen in. You're nearly twenty. It's time you learned about the company."

Vivienne smirked, "I don't mind where I stay as long as you all are willing to have me."

Baron glared at her. "Do you think I raised fools?"

With that, he glanced over at Timothy and the others.

Timothy and his peers wore embarrassed expressions. It was not that they blamed Vivienne; it was just hard to accept what had happened right before their eyes.

But now, Timothy was coming to terms with it.

After all, the old lady had ten lives on her conscience, and she could not escape death in the end.

What Vivienne and Percival had done merely brought everything to light.

Baron's gaze then fell on Scott, who remained silent with a stern face.

Vivienne did not say more and took the seat next to Kala.

Baron continued, "Kala, now that Vivienne has paid the penalty fee, it's up to you whether you want to stay in show business."

They did not question how Vivienne had come into so much money. After all, Karen's daughter could not be doing too badly, especially with that black card filled with funds, and with the backing of the Ellington family, a penalty fee was nothing to them.

Kala nodded. "Alright."

Then, Baron went on to delegate tasks and finally got to the crux of the matter. "Since Judith was one of our own and made a mistake, we can't shirk responsibility. I'll issue an apology and provide compensation for the victims' families. On top of that, we need to push forward new projects. We're venturing into robotics, and Griffin will join our team. Everyone needs to play their part so the Brooks family can recover our losses as swiftly as possible."

Vivienne was intrigued. She had assumed Scott would be the one to turn things around, not Baron.

Baron, who often seemed under the thumb of Richard and was frequently in the sanatorium, had appeared less capable to her.

But now, Baron was orchestrating a comeback with new projects and had even managed to recruit

Griffin, which was quite unexpected.

Griffin, from the ancient warrior lineage? Were the Rivenwood families not reluctant to deal with those

from such backgrounds?

"That's all. I'm tired and need to rest," Baron said, heading upstairs.

Timothy and the others busied themselves with Baron's orders.

Kala was whisked away by her agent's call.

Soon, the grand hall was left with just Scott and Vivienne.

Scott lifted his gaze to Vivienne and said in a deep voice, "Come upstairs with me. We need to talk."

Vivienne flashed a mischievous smile. "Perfect! I've been wanting to have a chat with you as well."

After a brief glance at her, Scott turned and ascended the staircase.

In the room, Vivienne sauntered over to a chair and slumped down with a roguish air. "So, what's on your mind?"

Scott just looked at her, staying silent for a moment.

After a heavy pause, he finally spoke, his voice slow and deliberate, "Have your foster parents been by the Brooks Mansion lately?"

"Missing them, are you?" Vivienne chuckled.

"They are guests, after all. It's been a while, so I thought I'd ask," Scott tried to soften his tone.

Vivienne's hand rested on the armrest, tapping rhythmically as her smile widened, "Now, are you referring to Rowan and Ismene, who've been masquerading as my foster parents, or my actual foster parents?"

"What?" Scott was taken aback, a sharp glint in his eyes.

"Mr. Brooks, are you still in the dark? The two at the Brooks Mansion, they're fakes," Vivienne continued to smile, a chilling sort of grin.

Before Scott could respond, Vivienne slowly added, "No, that's not right! I shouldn't call you Mr. Brooks.

'Mr. B' is more fitting, isn't it? Your people have been staying at the Brooks Mansion for days. Don't you know where they've gone?"

At her words, Scott was shocked. "You!"

How had she found out?



He had always been so careful in his disguise!

Vivienne shook her head, pondering for a moment before continuing, "Actually, 'Mr. B' isn't quite right either. Maybe 'Mr. B's double' would be more accurate, wouldn't it?"