

Million-Dollar 391

Chapter 391

Percival, Jasper, and Yuri sat together.

"Mr. Ellington, I hear your company's been keeping tabs on the Seaside Mining project?" Yuri inquired.

Percival did not intend to conceal anything. As he added a slice of strawberry cheesecake to his plate,

he said, "Yes, I heard there's a top-notch mine out there, and it's piqued my interest."

Yuri eyed the slice of strawberry cheesecake, saying, "Someone will deliver the contract to you later.

As for the details, your company can hash those out... So, Mr. Ellington, you're a fan of strawberry

cheesecake?"

"It's Vivienne's favorite." Percival chuckled. "And thanks for the heads-up about the mine, Mr. Perez."

"No need for thanks. We've vetted many companies, and you're the only one with the capacity to take

on such a big project."

The group settled back at the table, which was laden with an assortment of dishes.

"Young lady, you should eat up. Look how thin you are," Jasper kept passing dishes to Vivienne,

worried she was not eating enough.

Vivienne, unfazed, replied, "I never shortchange my stomach."

"That's right, you can't let your stomach suffer. What you eat is all yours. Dig in."

"You eat too," Vivienne said with a smile, serving Jasper some food.

Yuri felt a pang at the tip of his nose; it had been years since he had seen his father smile so openly.

Zelda squeezed Yuri's hand under the table, a silent comfort.

They all knew that Vivienne's presence had reignited hope in Jasper.

Whether the hope was real or not, they were all genuinely grateful for her presence.

After the meal, Vivienne politely declined Jasper's offer to drive them home, choosing instead to walk back with Percival.

Jasper watched their retreating figures, his eyes glistening with tears.

If Sasha were still around, she would be a mother by now, with a daughter just as grown.

And he would have cherished his granddaughter, holding her close and protecting her with all his heart.

"Let's head back, Dad," Zelda said, helping Jasper into the car.

Jasper wiped his eyes, "Yuri, keep looking. I have a feeling... There's something about Vivienne that reminds me of Sasha."

...

Under the inky moonlight, mingling with the dim glow of street lamps and lost amid the hustle and

bustle of traffic, Percival walked hand in hand with Vivienne beside the ginkgo trees lining the roadside.

Her long hair, caught by a gentle breeze, brushed lightly against Percival's shoulder.

"Mr. Wolf, I really enjoyed dinner tonight," Vivienne suddenly said, her voice low and tinged with mirth,

her pleasure barely concealed.

Percival smoothed back a stray lock of her hair and said, "Yeah, me too."

If Vivienne was happy, so was he.

Vivienne hopped onto the curb, arms spread wide, balancing herself with ease.

It had been so long since she felt this light, this at ease.

The last time was more than a decade ago.

Since her mother's death, she had not dared to relax for a moment.

But now, she felt comfortable.

Percival walked beside her, looking up into the dazzling stars above.

A live broadcast of the Centurial E-sport Hotel tournament played on a giant screen on the street,

featuring the advancement matches between Runic Country and Helix Country.

When the camera captured Aaron and Kenneth in the picture, it showed they were both in the audience, eyes glued to the screen.

"Mr. Wolf, would you rather face Runic Country or Helix Country?" Vivienne stopped suddenly.

Percival stepped up beside her, wrapping an arm around her waist, saying, "Runic Country. They're Kenneth's second biggest rival, after your team."

"Okay, then I'll take on Helix Country. See you in the finals."

Vivienne shared this sentiment; having already bested Runic Country once, beating a team they had already conquered seemed pointless.

Percival lifted Vivienne's chin and asked softly, "How about a bet?"

Vivienne thought for a moment. Mr. Wolf's money was as good as hers, so that was off the table, and she needed nothing else.

"Let's bet that the loser has to clean the winner's team's training room for a week."

A smirk twitched at Percival's lips; this girl knew how to place a bet. She was well aware that even if

she lost, he would never actually let her clean the training room.

"What? Afraid of losing?" Vivienne raised an eyebrow, a sparkle of amusement in her eyes.

Percival playfully tapped her nose, "Alright, you're on."

Vivienne cocked an eyebrow. "Mr. Wolf, you're going to lose."

As the qualifying matches ended, the four teams with the highest popularity moving into the group

stage were Hawk, Snake, Runic Country's RED, and Helix Country's FAI.

Hawk had been the underdog, with seven straight losses breaking their fans' hearts. But their

breakthrough performance in the qualifiers and victory over RED had their popularity soaring once

again.

The group stage was set as Vivienne and Percival had predicted: Hawk versus FAI, Snake versus

RED.

Bennett and his team were worried upon seeing the draw.

FAI, the previous year's champions, were a young and well-coordinated team with lightning-fast

reflexes. They had stormed the qualifiers with a 35-0 scoreline, a force to be reckoned with, aiming to

defend their title.

The pre-match pep rally, a gathering for all participants, was the organizer's attempt to ease the competitive tension.

There had been scuffles before past matches, resulting in bans. Thus, the focus was on maintaining a friendly atmosphere.

However, with the competition heating up, being too relaxed now would be rude.

Hawk and Snake were surprisingly chummy at the pep rally, united against the rest of the world.

The players from Helix Country were yapping about something, probably trying to ruffle Aaron's feathers with their taunting looks.

Kenneth kicked at his stool and said, "Cut the chatter. We'll see who's boss on the field. Can't understand me? Too bad I'm not your translator. If you can't afford one, I can hire one for you."

The folks from Runic Country did not look too friendly either, squinting their eyes at Kenneth.

Aaron popped open a can of soda with gusto. "Oops, my bad, didn't see you with your eyes open.

Thought you were snoozing and wanted to give you a wake-up call."

The organizers would have given them an earful if it were anyone else. But who would dare to mess

with these two rich kids? Thus, the officials just threw in a few words and quickly wrapped up the tension-filled meeting.

Stepping outside, Kenneth gave Aaron a nudge with his shoulder, "Don't be a wimp. If you don't make it to the finals, I'll look down on you for life."

Aaron shot back without missing a beat, "If you lose to someone I've beaten, you better quit gaming for good and disappear."

The match started, and Hawk was up first. Aaron performed as usual, easily taking first blood.

FAI was not far behind, securing the second kill soon after.

Quentin, having been solo killed, started to panic until Bennett stepped in, "Remember what Vivienne said. Stay cool. They're playing the long game. We need to focus on our farm."

Quentin took a deep breath and refocused while Aaron, on the other side, was wreaking havoc in the enemy's jungle, thoroughly annoying them.

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In the spectator stands, Kenneth silently nodded in approval. To counter a nasty move, one had to fight back with the same level of grit.

"Captain Kenneth, have you noticed? This year, Hawk seems different," his teammate whispered

sidelong.

Kenneth nodded. "Yeah, they remind me of the squad that took home the championship six times in a row. Looks like their so-called 'import' is that same coach from back then."

"Darn, that makes things tricky."

Kenneth scratched his nose. "What's there to worry about? My bro's got game. If we stick to his playbook, we're golden."

With Percival in their corner, Kenneth felt fearless.

Elsewhere, Percival and Vivienne kept a close eye on the match.

"Aaron's skills have improved," Percival noted.

Vivienne's lips curled into a smile, "He was always good, just lacked the right synergy. A few pointers, and he figured it out himself."

Percival eyed Vivienne with a hint of jealousy. "Vivienne, don't praise other guys in front of me."

"Fine, I'll praise him behind your back."

"That's not allowed either."

Vivienne pinched Percival's cheek playfully. "Mr. Wolf, no sulking now."

Percival pressed his lips, choosing to respond not with words but with a bold move that left nothing to the imagination.

"Damn! The coach just kissed his fiancée!"

"Talk about spicy! This is live. Aren't they worried about the audience?"

Kenneth clenched his teeth in disgust. "Such an indecorous woman, still seducing my brother!"

Callum clicked his tongue. "Captain Kenneth, they're engaged. How does that have anything to do with seduction?"

"Just shut up."

Kenneth's focus shifted as Aaron led an aggressive push toward the enemy's nexus.

Ten minutes later.

"Brilliant!"

Hawk claimed victory in game one.

The group stage required a best of three, and during the break, Vivienne took the opportunity to recalibrate their strategy.

"They'll definitely ban your heroes next round. Plan B is a go. Let's wrap this up early and call it a day."

Vivienne set the plan in motion, and the second game commenced.

FAI clearly had not anticipated Hawk's shift in tactics, especially their jungler switching to an AD carry!

What they assumed would be a cunning move turned into a total rout.

With two straight wins, FAI was out, and Hawk advanced to the finals.

The internet erupted with shock, and reporters swarmed Hawk for comments.

"JIE, was picking AD a premeditated decision?"

"We heard Hawk brought in an import. Is that true?"

"After seven consecutive losses, what turned the tide for your team?"

Standing front and center, Aaron replied with a smile, "We didn't bring in any imports, but our old coach

is back. With her guidance, we won't lose."

Soon, the news of Hawk's mysterious coach's return was all over the internet.

After the mysterious coach's departure, Hawk had moments of glory, but they faded over time.

Now, with the coach back, their morale was sky-high, and the curiosity was palpable.

Kenneth peered through the small window by Hawk's locker room door, eager to catch a glimpse of this enigmatic coach.

This was the person he admired, second only to his brother!

He had watched Aaron and the mysterious coach go head-to-head on a live stream.

Their moves, skill, and technique were on par with Percival.

After Percival left the Snake, they had tried to lure this mysterious mentor with a hefty sum but came up empty.

Kenneth was dying to meet this coach face-to-face, get an autograph, maybe a selfie, share a meal, and get some gaming tips if possible.

Above all, he was itching to see a showdown between this mysterious coach and Percival in a solo match.

It would be an E-sports event for the ages.

Click! The locker room door swung open.

Caught off guard, Kenneth tumbled inside.

Vivienne raised an eyebrow. If she had not recognized Kenneth, she might have kicked him.

"What's wrong with you?" She asked as if staring at a lunatic. Why was he snooping at the door?

Kenneth scrambled up, his disdain for Vivienne clear as day.

"Why are you here?"

Vivienne chuckled, "Why shouldn't I be?"

Kenneth knew about Aaron and Vivienne's relationship, so he assumed it was just sisterly support.

"Tell Aaron he's going down. We'll see him in the finals." Despite his words, Kenneth kept glancing back, searching for someone.

"Stop looking. He's still getting interviewed. What do you want?" Vivienne, growing impatient, settled on

the couch, eyeing Kenneth.

Kenneth scoffed. "I'm not here for him. Forget it. You wouldn't understand. I can't fathom what my brother sees in you."

Even if she was attractive and could play the piano and design clothes, she did not know how to play games.

To Kenneth, that was unforgivable; Vivienne was not worthy of his brother.

Vivienne crossed her long legs, resting her chin on her hand, amused, "Is that so? But I'll still become your sister-in-law, and you'll have to call me sister. What will you do about that?"

"I won't! I'll never call you that. One of these days, my brother will call off the engagement!"

Kenneth's face flushed as he shouted and darted out of the room.

Vivienne watched his retreat with a laugh. "Kids these days!"

She seemed to forget that in others' eyes, she was just a kid herself!

As the locker room door closed again, Vivienne tapped open her phone, browsing through the message from Matthew.

[Carl's been consumed by racing, avoiding the dangerous tracks. Ronald's sticking to the office routine, much like Timothy. As for Kala, she's lost some assets due to Judith's incident and is facing some ostracism, but nothing major for now.]

Vivienne simply replied with an [Okay.]

[Also, Vivienne, Rowan and Ismene took off. Should we track them down?]

Vivienne paused for a moment.

She would have forgotten entirely about those two had Matthew not mentioned them.

After rescuing the baby, she handed them the antidote and washed her hands of the matter.

[Throw away what's useless. Just make sure Brian keeps an eye out while he's on Brody's tail. If you

catch those two stirring up trouble again, lock them up.]

Rowan and Ismene had double-crossed the GTO and would not dare show their faces.

Otherwise, Scott would definitely be hot on their heels.

Speaking of Scott, Vivienne inquired: [How's it going on Scott's end?]

[Was just about to tell you. Scott's surfaced. He's sniffing around for Rowan and Ismene's

whereabouts, even got Frostfire Intelligence Agency on it, but he's slippery. No luck tracking him yet.]

Vivienne cracked a smile. [Well then, let's have some fun with it.]

Reading the message Vivienne sent back, Matthew instantly got her drift. [Got it, Vivienne. Don't

worry!]

Closing her phone, Vivienne stretched her neck.

The finals were fast approaching, and she planned to make the most of the next few days to train hard.

She could not afford to lose to Mr. Wolf.

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On the other side, Kenneth returned to the arena, his mind set on victory.

Aaron had made it to the finals, and Kenneth was determined not to lose to him.

He had to triumph in the final showdown and show everyone that he was every bit Aaron's equal.

Below, Percival watched with a discerning eye. He could tell from the gameplay that Kenneth's desire to win was too intense. He would likely falter in the finals without the right mindset, even if he won today.

Percival could also see that Aaron's skills were superior to Kenneth's. Now, the game was as much about mental fortitude as it was about teamwork.

He had confidence in their team's synergy, but the mindset part was challenging.

After wrapping up an interview, Aaron did not idle. He headed to the locker room to strategize with Vivienne. Then, they made their way to the stands to observe Kenneth's match.

From afar, Percival spotted the pair laughing and chatting as they approached.

Kenneth's worried gaze instantly sharpened.

In the blink of an eye, here was Aaron cozying up to Vivienne again!

Vivienne noticed Percival and was about to head over when Aaron's grip on her wrist stopped her.

With a natural ease, Aaron stepped in front of Vivienne, blocking her view of Percival. "Vivienne, everyone's waiting for your insights. Let's watch the match, and you can break down the plays for us."

Vivienne agreed, realizing that real-time analysis would deepen their understanding. "Sounds good, let's go."

Hence, Percival watched helplessly as Aaron led Vivienne to a section of the stands on the opposite side.

Aaron sat down, casually throwing a provocative smile at Percival's way.

Percival's face darkened, and he scoffed.

Did Aaron think he could stop him?

He simply had to walk over!

He was about to stand up when his phone buzzed with a text.

It was from Vivienne and read, [Don't come over. We're discussing tactics. Remember our bet!]

Percival felt his irritation spike but settled back in his seat. When his Vivienne made a request, he naturally would not intrude.

Yet, his eyes never returned to the broadcast screen for the rest of the match.

When the crowd erupted in cheers, he was still clueless about who had won.

"Bro, we did it! We're in the finals!" Kenneth was the first to burst from the stage, excitedly lunging at

Percival.

Percival held up a hand, stopping him with ease. "Celebrate after you win the finals."

Kenneth was momentarily choked up, but as an E-sports player, he knew the ultimate goal was to clinch the championship.

No matter the match, he had to fight with everything he had to take home the trophy. That was the basic professional ethic of an E-sports athlete.

Kenneth nodded intensely. "Yes, I'll take the title!"

Percival turned to look at the stands where Vivienne had already returned to the locker room, surrounded by Aaron's team.

Now that Snake had won, the two teams would face off again in two days. Would it be a battle for revenge or a crushing defeat?

The pressure was immense for Hawk, which had not made it past the group stage the previous year.

A loss this year would leave them without any chance of redemption, especially since this match was

Bennett and his team's final game.

It was their last stop in their professional careers, and they did not want to end on a loss.

"Bro, let's go celebrate!" Kenneth's heart was racing. They had beaten their old rival, RED, who had

stopped them from reaching the finals last year. That defeat had always rankled him.

Even a later victory in a friendly match had not felt satisfying. Today's win was a breath of relief.

This win was a huge morale boost!

Percival looked at him coldly. "Aaron's gone back to train, and you want to celebrate? Everyone back to

the training room, now!"

"Yes, sir!"

Led by Kenneth, the team hurried back to prepare.

Percival exhaled deeply, his gaze fixed on Hawk's direction.

This was not just about his bet with Vivienne anymore; it was a clash with Aaron.

Did that kid think he could win Vivienne's favor? Dream on!

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In Hawk's training room, Vivienne called Matthew, assembling a team to practice against Hawk.

Theoretical knowledge recited hundreds of times was nothing compared to hands-on experience.

After a round of play, Hawk was decimated, not even managing to take down a single tower.

"Coach, the people you brought in are unbeatable, not just for Kenneth but even for Aaron. This is like bringing a gun to a knife fight!" Fergus lamented, clearly demoralized.

Quentin, who had also been soundly defeated, complained, "Coach, this is brutal."

Vivienne leaned back in her chair, a lollipop hanging from her mouth. "Keep going."

"More?" Bennett sounded drained.

Vivienne locked eyes with the deflated trio. "Even the most precise team has weaknesses. You aim for a lethal strike, not just maneuvering. Remember, you must think of every possible scenario in the game and how to counter them to stand a chance at winning."

As Vivienne spoke, Aaron had already regrouped his team. "Vivienne, let's do it again."

She nodded in agreement.

Several rounds later, Aaron's team was still outmatched, but Vivienne could see they were adapting, even trapping Matthew at his base in one game.

"Alright, that's enough for today. Rest up and prepare for the finals in two days."

Vivienne shut down her computer. Staying focused was crucial, but overexertion could backfire.

Back in Snake's training room, the atmosphere was just as intense.

Percival and Leopold's team left their players on the verge of mental collapse, yet steadily improving and honing their strategies.

Both teams were primed for the finals, the air charged with anticipation.

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In the pre-game preparations, the rivalry between Aaron and Kenneth was already ablaze.

"This time, I'm going to get the MVP for sure. Just you wait!" Kenneth shot a challenging look at Aaron, not backing down an inch.

Aaron mimicked Vivienne's snarky tone perfectly, "Oh, waiting to see you bawl your eyes out, kiddo?"

"Aaron, you're younger than me, so quit acting like you're the big bad wolf."

"Can't help it. This will be my tenth time snagging the FMVP."

"You're full of it."

"Not as much as you are."

The tension between the two teams was palpable, but the two mysterious coaches were as close as two peas in a pod.

On the rooftop outside the arena, Vivienne leaned against Percival's shoulder, browsing through an app for cleaning supplies.

"What are you buying?" Percival inquired.

Vivienne's lips curled into a mischievous smile, "Just picking out the perfect broom for you."

Percival playfully lifted Vivienne's chin, teasingly gazing into her eyes, "So sure I'll lose, huh?"

"Absolutely." Vivienne raised an eyebrow.

Percival caressed her lips, his eyes simmering with an intensity he could not hide, and said, "Then let's raise the stakes."

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Vivienne arched an eyebrow, a playful smirk on her lips. "Let's hear it."

"If I lose, you owe me a dance," Percival declared, his eyes holding a depth like the ocean as they fixed

on her luminous, moonlit gaze.

She was stunning, breathtaking. Every time he looked into her eyes, he found beauty that shone with a graceful light he treasured above all else.

"Deal, I'll take the bet," she said, her voice laced with a hint of mischief. Leaning forward, Vivienne's soft red lips brushed against Percival's cheek.

After a moment, she pushed away from him. "The game has started, Mr. Wolf," she teased before leaving the rooftop.

Percival touched his cheek, still feeling the ghost of her kiss.

"Just you wait, I'll get my revenge," he muttered under his breath.

Down at the gaming arena, the atmosphere was electric, with a massive online audience tuning in. It was not just the gaming community—people who did not typically watch E-sports were also glued to their screens for this event. After all, the champion would be a hometown hero no matter who won.

Fans of Team Snake were waving banners with Kenneth's name, while supporters of Team Hawk were not far behind, hoisting up large signs rooting for Aaron.

As the players took their seats and the host announced the rules, Vivienne and Percival found their

spots in the stands, eyes fixated on the live feed.

The match kicked off with Kenneth banning Aaron's go-to hero. Unperturbed, Aaron picked a solid, all-around choice.

Vivienne's lips curved into a knowing smile. The show was about to begin.

The heroes selected, Aaron played steadily, drawing first blood against Kenneth and clearing his jungle camps. Kenneth cursed under his breath but rallied, taking Aaron down in a counterattack and even snatching Bennett's red buff.

The match was a back-and-forth dance. Team Snake's synergy was clear, quickly gaining the upper hand. But Quentin of Team Hawk had stealthily secured the best position for the dragon. However, with Callum's help, Kenneth clinched it.

The tides of battle were apparent. Aaron was still powering up, farming his jungle while letting Fergus take hits and Bennett feed a couple of kills.

Kenneth was smug. He knew Aaron was not comfortable with his hero and seemed outmatched.

Launching a team fight, Team Snake pushed two turrets on the top lane. On the other side, Bennett

took the opportunity to knock down one of the enemy's turrets.

Still, Team Snake maintained control.

With the baron now in play, Kenneth took it down, bloodied but unbowed, and they pushed for the high ground.

Aaron finally made a move, acing Team Snake in a solo slaughter.

Team Hawk rallied, taking down the outer turrets on all lanes.

Due to the baron buff, this was not enough for a comeback.

After regrouping, Team Snake launched an assault on the top lane, using the last of the baron's power to reach the nexus.

Team Hawk fought valiantly but fell short.

The first game went to Team Snake.

The second game started with Hawk banning first, and just like Kenneth, Aaron banned Kenneth's last hero yet chose the same hero for himself.

Kenneth had anticipated this move, having trained with different heroes the past few days.

Team Hawk changed tactics, initiating an early team fight—a risky move for any pro player. Engaging in

an all-out team fight without enough net worth was almost suicide.

As they tried to hold mid-lane, Bennett took a detour and snatched the opponent's red buff, leaving

Callum fuming over his lost treasure.

Percival grinned at Vivienne's strategy. "Playing mind games, Vivienne?"

Her lips quirked up in response. "My players have nerves of steel."

Percival squeezed her hand. "No, only I belong to you."

Vivienne rolled her eyes. Was he really getting jealous now?

On the field, Aaron rampaged through the jungle, securing the dragon and catching Kenneth off guard.

It was clear now that Aaron's previous performance was a ruse—he knew this hero all too well.

Aaron's solo rampage continued, culminating in a pentakill with about half health left.

While Hawk seized this moment to push mid all the way to the inhibitor.

In a fit of desperation, Kenneth went for a solo pentakill.

Percival watched, knowing the end was near. Kenneth had lost his patience again.

Kenneth, now low on health, could only retreat.

But as Team Snake prepared for a comeback, Aaron teleported to the high ground, securing another solo kill thanks to Lennox's last-ditch spell before being taken down.

By the time Snake recovered, Hawk had claimed the baron. The final push toppled the nexus.

Kenneth was livid, nearly smashing his computer.

The third game saw Kenneth drawing first and second blood, dominating the jungle, and targeting Aaron relentlessly.

In the stands, Percival leaned back, his hand intertwined with Vivienne's.

She patted his shoulder with a feigned comfort that could not hide the twinkle in her eye. "Don't worry,

Mr. Wolf. Your cleaning gear is all set."

The outcome was inevitable. Despite a close match, Snake's composure was shattered.

As the shoutcaster announced, "Victory for Team Hawk," confetti rained down, fireworks erupted, and the championship trophy ascended amid cheers.

Team Hawk, the world champions, lifted their trophy high, basking in the glory of their hard-fought victory.

The microphone was passed to Aaron, now a legend in his own right, as the crowd erupted in

celebration for their new hometown heroes.

Clutching the microphone with hands that could not quite steady themselves, Aaron struggled to conceal his excitement, his voice wavering and eyes glistening with tears. "This victory, the person we owe it to the most is our coach!"

Aaron's gaze swept across the sea of faces below him until he found the one that had become etched into his memory. "Without her, there would be no 'us' today. I wouldn't have reached these heights. I just want to say, Coach, thank you. There will always be a place for you in my heart. You are, and always will be, the most important person to me."

After his words hung in the air, the room stilled for a few heartbeats before erupting into a frenzy of cheers.

But was this really just gratitude he was expressing?

It sounded suspiciously like a love confession!

Aaron ducked his head, taking a moment to compose himself before he looked up again, only to find that Vivienne had vanished from sight.

His grip on the microphone tightened, and a shadow of sadness flickered across his eyes.

"While I have this moment," Aaron said, his voice dropping to a gravitas that commanded the room's attention, "there's something else I need to announce."

The buzzing crowd hushed, hanging on his every word.

After a brief pause, Aaron spoke again, each word deliberate and weighted, "After this competition, I will be retiring along with the entire team!"

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The world champion announced his retirement the moment he lifted the trophy, sending shock waves through the competitive gaming community.

Aaron's retirement news hit the trending lists instantly, outshining even Hawk's victory celebration in terms of online explosion.

Yet, the person who took it the hardest was Kenneth.

"Dammit, he wins, and then he quits? How is that any different from those jerks who ghost you after a one-night stand!" Kenneth raged.

Callum tried to reason. "Dude, that... Might not be the best analogy."

Kenneth shot him a glare that could scorch the earth. "Well then, genius, you tell me how to put it!"

The room fell silent, fearing Kenneth's wrath. Seething, Kenneth grabbed his phone and called Aaron,

unleashing a tirade that lasted a solid ten minutes without repeating a single insult.

Aaron, however, said nothing, hanging up the phone as soon as Kenneth took a breath.

Kenneth stared at his phone, the tone droning in his ear, his face so dark that even the devil would

steer clear.

Callum instinctively scooted back.

They all knew Kenneth was at his most terrifying, not when he was shouting but silent like this.

Kenneth's grip on his phone whitened his knuckles.

Suddenly, with a loud crash, Kenneth slammed his phone to the ground and spun around, intent on

confronting Aaron.

But standing behind him, more menacing than Hades himself, was Percival.

"Bro," Kenneth immediately lowered his head, "I screwed up, punish me whatever way you want."

Percival sat down, his long legs crossed, leaning back casually on the couch. He looked up and asked,

"What did you do wrong?"

"I embarrassed you."

Percival's eyes flashed coldly. "You still don't realize what you did wrong, and you have the nerve to settle scores with Aaron?"

Kenneth flinched as if struck.

He knew Percival was furious now.

"Why jump into a trap knowingly? Why go for a solo kill on Aaron in game three? You neglected the high ground, focused solely on beating Aaron, and ignored the rest. Have all my words these past few days been for nothing?"

Percival's questions left Kenneth speechless.

From the moment the match ended, he knew that they lost mainly because of his own doing.

He let his temper get the best of him and disrupted the team's synergy, allowing Hawk to find a gap.

Their greatest strength was their teamwork, yet he was so provoked by Aaron that he lost sight of everything else.

Otherwise, in terms of teamwork alone, even if Hawk had won, it would not have been such an easy victory.

Kenneth was chastised into silence while the rest of Team Snake members tried to smooth things over.

"Coach, Aaron just wound up the captain. He's not usually like this..."

"Wrong is wrong, there are no excuses!" Percival bellowed, smashing the marble side table with a slap of his hand.

Kenneth had never seen Percival this angry before and had a feeling that it was not just about losing the match.

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Meanwhile, on the rooftop.

"Vivienne, we won." Aaron touched the medal around his neck, his face devoid of excitement.

Vivienne understood.

Aaron was at the prime age for an E-sports player, the pinnacle of his career.

Yet he chose this moment to retire.

And the reason for his retirement was not just because his old teammates were moving on.

The main factor was the pressure from the Miller family.

As the sole heir to the Miller family, he had missed out on a lot of professional training in his youth and now had to catch up quickly in order to navigate the business world with ease.

"Regret it?" Vivienne asked.

Aaron let out a bitter laugh. "Regret? How could I not? It's my passion, my irreplaceable glory, my very own triumph. How could I not regret letting it go?"

Aaron bowed his head, wiping away a tear before looking up again, his face stoic as before.

Vivienne patted his head, "If you've made your choice, don't regret it. Life's full of crossroads, but the path is yours to choose."

Aaron nodded firmly at Vivienne's words.

She did not say more. Aaron was smart enough to know that even if he continued in E-sports, there would come a day to retire. By then, there might be no place for him in the Miller family.

He was not doing it for money but for his mother.

Aaron could not allow the Miller family to look down on him. For his mother's sake, he had to stand tall!

Vivienne withdrew her hand, saying, "Go say goodbye to the team members."

"Vivienne, aren't you celebrating with us?"

As Vivienne walked away, she waved her hand dismissively, "No, I've got a date."

Aaron watched Vivienne's retreating figure, the light in his eyes dimming.

"Vivienne, I've regretted it once. From now on, I won't let myself regret again!" He declared inwardly.

A discreet black luxury car rolled out at the Centurial E-sport Hotel parking lot.

Vivienne sat in the back, her mood elated.

She was looking forward to planning Percival's cleaning outfit.

And Percival, who had just been fuming, was now at Vivienne's mercy.

Thomas, the driver, glanced back, thinking that the only person who could toy with Percival like this was Vivienne.

Arriving at the Hawk Club, Vivienne led Percival straight to the training room, where they unexpectedly ran into Mark Miller.

"Ms. Vivienne? What are you doing here?" Mark was surprised.

Vivienne's expression was cool. "I'm here to clean."

"What?" Mark was taken aback, "You shouldn't be doing that. I'll hire a cleaner."

Vivienne, unfazed, had plans of her own.

"No need," Vivienne said as she took a seat. "Go ahead, Mr. Ellington."

Mark's face was a picture of horror as Percival picked up the broom from the corner.

One by one, Aaron and the rest of the team trickled back into the gym. After today, this place would no longer be theirs.

They decided to have a celebratory get-together right here to mark the occasion.

As everyone walked in, they caught sight of Percival awkwardly wielding the broom, locked in a fierce battle with a stubborn patch of dirt.

"Coach, is this some kind of family perk?" Bennett quirked an eyebrow.

Nope, nope. Percival with a broom was as out of place as a fish on a bicycle!

It was downright terrifying.

Quentin, however, let out a shocked yelp, "Holy smokes, my racing car model is shattered!"

Fergus noticed something else amiss, "Wait a minute, why is the gaming console smoking?"

Percival cleared his throat from the corner, continuing to fumble with the dirt that just would not sweep into the dustpan, "The car model... I was trying to dust it. And the console... must've gotten wet when I

mopped the floor, I guess."

Bennett's twitch became a full-on spasm.

What kind of dust could crush a car model?

And what kind of mopping technique would be involved to get water inside a gaming console?

Chapter 396

Lennox just could not stand it any longer. He snatched the broom from Percival's grasp, and with a

gentle tug, he swept the dust into the pan.

Crack! The broom head snapped off.

Percival furrowed his brow in annoyance. "That's the sixth time that's happened. Are your things

always this flimsy?"

Lennox replied with a slight hesitation, "Is it possible you're just too strong and snapped it yourself?"

"It's this piece of junk that's the problem," Percival grumbled, casting a disdainful glance at the broom

before turning to Quentin. "I had someone buy you a new racing car model and a desktop PC. They'll

be delivered soon."

Quentin, for his part, was not too fussed. He looked around at the further disarray. "It's a knock-off

anyway. Got it for ten bucks. But... Percival, maybe you should just stop cleaning."

Despite being older than Vivienne, Quentin and the others respected her technical expertise and would often follow Aaron's lead in calling her by her nickname. And since Percival was Vivienne's fiancé, they naturally called him by his first name.

Vivienne held back laughter, her delicate face turning a shade of red from the effort to conceal her laughter.

This must have been the first time Percival had been "rejected"!

Yet, he seemed filled with joy, and his mood visibly brightened.

Aaron's expression darkened slightly, though he said nothing, silently unplugging the computer to prevent the imminent explosion.

As he began to repair the broom, he asked Mark coldly, "What brings you here?"

Mark finally said, "I'm here to take you home."

"I'll be heading back tomorrow; we're celebrating here tonight. You go on ahead."

Mark knew Aaron well enough to understand his temperament. Today, Aaron had announced his retirement, which meant he would return to the Miller family fold tomorrow.

He had come to see if there was anything he could do to help, feeling the weight of his many debts to his son.

Before he could say anything else, the door to the training room burst open.

"Percival, the PC and racing model, and brand new cleaning supplies are here. Why on earth are you buying all this stuff and sending it here? Aren't you worried Kenneth will give you an earful? Ah, there's Vivienne! No wonder Hawk won today, with you coaching them!" Leopold remarked as he brought the items in.

Vivienne took a sip of her Coke. "Why do you talk so much?"

Leopold clamped his mouth shut, carrying five limited-edition racing models and placing them on the table. He could not help but blurt out, "How did this place get so messy? Don't you guys clean up around here?"

Everyone thought, "This is after the cleaning. Can you believe it?"

Percival gave Leopold a nudge with his foot. "Enough with the chatter. Change out the PC."

Leopold muttered, "Fine, fine, I'm the scapegoat."

Pointing at 'scapegoat number two' Thomas, Leopold called him over to help with the installation.

Bennett and the others, feeling a bit guilty, pitched in to help.

Percival did not just replace the PC; he upgraded the entire setup—desk, chair, the works—leaving the room far better equipped than before.

Quentin's eyes gleamed at the sight of the limited-edition racing models. "These... these are like a hundred thousand a pop!"

Leopold looked up, "Like them? For the sake that you're Vivienne's players, I'll throw in a few more. My place is full of them; his even more so."

Percival, the one being pointed at, looked up and dropped a bombshell that sent chills through the Hawk team, "For the next seven days, I'll be here cleaning."

"What!" The usually composed Bennett exclaimed, turning to Vivienne. "Coach, please, we still need this space. We've got the new cleaning bots. They're fully automated. No need for manual labor. Let's not do this."

Vivienne remained silent, but Percival, sitting steadily, insisted, "No, I lost a bet."

Bennett pleaded, "Spare me, please. I still have to coach here!"

Aaron, seated at his computer, spoke slowly, "Those who don't understand E-sports don't belong in our training room. We don't need your cleaning."

Leopold nearly choked on his Coke.

"Don't understand E-sports? Kid, you couldn't be more naive." He thought.

Percival's lips curved into a smirk as he approached the computer, his gaze steady but icy, "Care for a match?"

Aaron was already bristling with competitive spirit, particularly with Percival challenging him in his own domain. "Let's do this. Lose, and you stay away from Vivienne."

Percival laughed coldly, paying little mind to Aaron. "I made a bet with Vivienne to clean your training room for a week if you won. So, if you lose, I won't bother you again. How about it?"

For the first time, Bennett and the others wanted Aaron to lose.

Aaron narrowed his eyes, "You're on!"

Vivienne sat to the side, eyes never lifting.

She had not seen Percival play, but she knew Aaron was no match for him.

Leopold perked up with interest, even getting Bennett and the crew to place bets.

Aaron chose his best character and went straight for Percival.

But in the blink of an eye, Aaron's screen went dark, his character slain.

The Hawk team was stunned. How had Percival done that?

Did he just score first blood?

Aaron respawned, only to be killed again and again, eight times in a row.

Percival stood firm in the center, not pushing forward, just waiting to take Aaron down.

By the end, Aaron could barely hold his mouse.

Vivienne coughed lightly, "Mr. Wolf, that's enough."

"Alright, for you," Percival said, glancing at Vivienne. His fingers moved swiftly, and he demolished the tower, securing a flawless solo victory.

Aaron could not believe it. How could he not have had even the slightest chance?

The rest of the Hawk team was speechless.

The last time they saw Aaron so thoroughly crushed was in a match against Vivienne.

What in the world was going on with Percival?

Bennett finally remembered what Percival had said earlier, something about a bet with Vivienne.

"Percival, why did you make a bet with our coach? Was it because Kenneth is your younger brother?"

Leopold cut in before anyone else could speak, "You guys still don't know? Percival's the freelance coach for Team Snake."

"No way! You're that legendary coach who led Snake to six straight championships!"

Percival calmly set his headphones on their stand, turned off the game, and stood up, walking towards Vivienne.

"Vivienne, I've won. Let's go," said Percival, extending his hand with a gentle tone.

Vivienne took his hand and turned to Bennett and the others, "I'll skip the victory party. You all have fun."

That was when Aaron suddenly spoke up, "Percival, are you really Snake's coach?"

Percival gave Aaron a cool glance, said nothing, and walked away with Vivienne's hand in his.

But Aaron understood.

Percival was saying with his eyes—Even in your domain, I can beat you so bad you won't be able to lift

your head.

Chapter 397

At the TIC Research Institute, Calista strode in with the confidence of someone who owned the place.

She slipped into her pristine lab coat, snapped on a pair of gloves, and began to prepare her array of scientific instruments meticulously.

As her colleagues filtered into work, they could not help but cast puzzled glances her way. Unfazed by their stares, Calista selected a few essential tools and turned to the bewildered researchers. "Unless there's a pink slip with my name on it that I've yet to receive, my presence here should come as no surprise," she quipped with an authority that commanded the room.

The researchers collected themselves. "No, of course not, Dr. Blake."

"Good, then let's get to work," Calista said, her eyes flickering with impatience. "Have these items delivered to my office later. I don't want to be disturbed while conducting my research."

She handed a list to her assistant, Holden, whose eyes widened in confusion upon reading it. These items had nothing to do with their current projects.

"Problem?" Calista arched an eyebrow.

Quick to recover, Holden shook his head. "No. It's just that we've never used some of these before, and

they could be dangerous if mishandled."

A scoff escaped Calista. "Playing it safe hasn't exactly helped us meet Mr. Percy's expectations, has it?

If we don't innovate, what use will we be to him, or do you fancy yourself a better scientist than I?"

Holden clamped his mouth shut and hurried off to gather the requested items.

Calista retreated to her private lab, a space she had earned as the institute's director. Here, under the radar of her subordinates, she could delve into the confidential task assigned by the enigmatic Scott.

As soon as the door clicked shut, beads of cold sweat dotted her forehead. The pressure of developing a virus under the watchful eyes of so many was immense. Still, she had always maintained an air of untouchable authority, which now served her well in keeping prying eyes at bay.

Pouring over the documents Scott had entrusted her with, Calista's gaze hardened. The document was highly confidential, and the task was extremely risky. She was playing a dangerous game, but it was the only way to regain her freedom from Scott's manipulations and regain the attention of the elusive Percival.

With determination and resolve in her eyes, Calista yelled inwardly, "Vivienne, the day this virus sees

the light of day is the day of your death!”

Meanwhile, Scott removed his headphones with a satisfied smile. He had been keeping a close watch on Calista, confident in her ambition and desperation to prove her worth. He did not fear her betrayal in the slightest; she was already an outcast, and Percival did not even care if she could enter the lab.

Plus, Calista was extremely arrogant about her medical skills. Only the legendary Specter Healer or someone like Brody, who once saved her life, could possibly sway her now.

Scott left for a covert meeting with a contact named Quincy, whose real name was Barnaby.

Barnaby, bandaged and waiting respectfully, anticipated an encounter with the mysterious Mr. B.

This was the first time she met Mr. B, although she had no idea if this man in front of her was the real Mr. B.

Scott nodded and sat down. Under the mask, his eyes were filled with intimidation and inspection as he kept silent.

Barnaby understood that Mr. B was waiting for her to speak.

Thus, she said, “Mr. B, sorry. They managed to save Dorian and Cordelia, but there was nothing I could do.

Scott held his forehead with one hand and continued to stare at Barnaby without saying a word.

Barnaby continued, "It all happened too quickly, and I had no choice but to give them up, but... I got the potion."

Finally, Scott reacted for the first time. With surprise, he said, "You got the potion?"

"Yes." Barnaby passed the potion to Scott, saying, "I got this from searching Cordelia's body. She had modified it and hid it in her bracelet. I don't know if this is the real portion, so please take a look."

Scott hastily grabbed the potion and walked to the lab next door.

After testing it, he confirmed it was the real potion! With this, he fully trusted Quincy.

He left the lab with relief and instructed Barnaby, "Don't show up for now, and take your time to recover

from your injuries. If anything comes up, I'll contact you the same way as before."

He had chosen to meet Quincy to determine if she betrayed the organization as Rowan and Ismene did.

He had already planned to slit her throat on the spot if something was not right.

Fortunately, Quincy was a smart girl.

Barnaby watched Mr. B leave, then immediately told her brother, Caspian, about what had happened.

This news very soon reached Percival.

As soon as Percival got the message, he was certain that the Mr. B Barnaby mentioned was indeed

Scott. After that day, he instructed Barnaby to find a way to get close to Mr. B, and he never contacted

her again. However, given how cautious he was, Mr. B would never so casually appear. Thus, Percival

knew this was not the time to capture Scott.

Scott had received the potion, and Percival was going to use this to his advantage to find the true Mr.

B. He would let Barnaby obtain insider information about the GTO and draw out the true mastermind

behind the organization.

Vivienne, receiving an update from Draven about Scott's whereabouts, instructed patience. The time

was not right to strike. They needed to wait for Barnaby's next move, to exploit Scott's trust, and to bait

the trap that would reveal the puppeteer behind the GTO's curtain.

As Vivienne put away her phone and looked out across the desolate landscape from her car, she could

not help but frown at the location they had chosen for a child poisoned and on the brink of death—a

dilapidated building that even the homeless would shun. It was a stark reminder of their cruel and merciless world, a place where life hung in the balance, and the stakes were higher than ever.

Percival gently held Vivienne's hand, carefully kicking aside the pebbles and debris that littered their path.

Following the convoluted map drawn by Barnaby, they eventually reached the top floor of the abandoned high-rise, navigating through a maze of corridors.

Upon opening the door, they were taken aback to find a small room, surprisingly well-equipped with medical apparatus.

In the center, on a hospital bed, lay a girl, her body riddled with tubes.

Vivienne and Percival's expressions shifted instantly.

Anna!

How could it be her?

Had Leopold not secured her a spot at the prestigious Elite University?

Vivienne's gaze sharpened as she approached to assess Anna's injuries.

The girl was deep in a coma, struggling to breathe, her skin marred by sores, her heartbeat faint and

faltering.

Vivienne swiftly sealed vital acupressure points on Anna's body, initiating the detoxification of the poison coursing through her veins.

After some urgent medical attention, Vivienne and Percival transported Anna to Percival's private clinic.

"She'll need to be under observation for a while longer; the poisoning is severe and has damaged her internal organs."

Vivienne stepped out of the operating room while Anna was transferred to the intensive care unit for continued monitoring.

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After getting Anna settled, Vivienne received another message from Matthew.

[Vivienne, Scott's found Rowan and Ismene!]

A sly smile curled Vivienne's ruby lips.

That Scott never did sit still. Fresh from nabbing the potion, now he was off cleaning house.

Truly a loyal hound for GTO.

Vivienne glanced up, her gaze laced with intrigue as she eyed Percival, her voice dripping with

seduction, "Mr. Wolf, there's a show worth catching. Care to join?"

Percival's lips curved subtly as he said, "Sounds good."

...

In a quaint village in the suburbs of Rivenwood.

Rowan and Ismene had been masquerading as locals, too scared to show their faces.

They feared not only Vivienne and Percival.

Just the name Mr. B was enough to send shivers down their spines.

Their betrayal of the organization was no secret now. If found, they were as good as dead.

They managed a farmhouse turned bed-and-breakfast, frequented by those seeking the rustic charm of

country living, basically hiding in plain sight. Who would suspect that these simple farmers were

assassins trained by GTO?

A sleek black SUV pulled up to the farmhouse, a reservation made days in advance.

Donning simple clothes and a straw hat, Rowan approached with a basket of apples.

"Mr. Brooks, I presume," Rowan said, sizing up the man before him.

Indeed, it was the missing patriarch of the Brooks family, Scott.

Although in hiding, Rowan and Ismene kept abreast of city affairs – one must always be ready to flee at a moment's notice.

However, to their surprise, the recent bed-and-breakfast booking was from Scott.

Scott smiled, the epitome of elegance in his black trench coat and finely tailored suit, which only accentuated his gentle demeanor.

"Yes, I called a few days ago," Scott said, his voice as soothing as a spring breeze.

Rowan's guard lowered. Scott was head of the Brooks family. After some digging, Rowan knew the Brooks family did not possess the potion. Even if they did, they were enemies of the organization, not a direct threat.

Ismene emerged from the house, clad in a floral blouse typical of the village women, fan in hand, and offered a naive smile, "Mr. Brooks, your room is ready. Shall we head to the beach for some fishing afterward?"

Scott nodded and followed Rowan inside.

But as he reached the doorstep, his stride halted abruptly.

"The air is quite fresh here."

"Yes, typical for the village," Rowan replied with a chuckle.

Scott turned, his eyes darkening as he slowly said, "I wonder how easy it is to die here."

Rowan froze, his hand already reaching into the basket, but before he could draw his weapon, Scott had pulled the trigger.

A muffled gunshot rang out; Rowan's shoulder bled profusely, though he managed to dodge in time.

Realizing the situation, Ismene flicked her fan, revealing a sharp dagger at its edge, and lunged at Scott.

The next moment, Scott kicked her away, firing two shots.

Ismene fell, legs flailing, unable to stand.

Scott settled into a wicker chair in the yard, meticulously cleaning his gun.

"Thought you could ambush me? Forgotten who trained you in stealth?"

To join GTO, one had to be skilled not just in ability but also in the art of killing.

Rowan gaped at Scott, "You... You're Mr. B!"

Scott aimed his gun squarely at Rowan's forehead, saying, "There's no need to dirty Mr. B's hands to

kill you."

Rowan was shocked, then realized they had been duped; they had not met Mr. B but his double!

Suddenly, Scott's gaze turned fierce, "There's only one fate for traitors—death!"

Bang!

Rowan braced for the end; Ismene trembled in fear.

But to their surprise, it was Scott who was hit!

Vivienne strolled in with a gun and a mocking smile. "Mr. Brooks, long time no see."

Scott, clutching his hand where the bullet had passed through, was now defenseless.

"How did you find me?" He asked coldly.

Vivienne twirled the gun in her hand, then stashed it in Percival's pocket. She preferred her needles;

guns had too much kickback.

She approached Scott, looking down on him with disdain. "Who do you think tipped you off about their

hideout?"

Scott was taken aback.

Vivienne had been fishing, and he was the fish!

The yard filled with officers in a flash; Rowan and Ismene were escorted out as everyone cornered

Scott in the yard.

Scott scoffed, eyes on Vivienne. "The issues between father and daughter, we'll settle ourselves."

Vivienne glared at Scott, not veiling her contempt, "Mr. Brooks, do you really think there's anything about you that my mother could possibly admire?"

A pang of pain struck Scott's heart.

Indeed!

Karen never cared for him.

Vivienne's smile was radiant yet filled with hatred, like a knife twisting into an invulnerable heart, sprinkling coarse salt on the wounds. "I was never your daughter. Didn't you always know?"

Scott clenched his teeth.

He had not expected Vivienne to so ruthlessly tear away his illusions, revealing the raw scars beneath, then rub salt into them.

"I know," Scott raised his gun again, aiming at Vivienne, "I've always known you were never my

daughter."

Percival stepped in front of Vivienne, his cold gaze fixed on Scott.

Vivienne shoved Percival aside, her voice tinged with exasperation as he said, "What's the fun in lying to yourself, huh?"

Scott let out a hollow laugh. "Vivienne, you're the spitting image of your mother."

Just then, Scott squeezed the trigger. Percival lunged at Vivienne, shielding her, but the anticipated gunshot never came.

Instead, with a loud bang, smoke erupted in the yard, quickly followed by the roar of an engine kicking to life.

Percival's brows furrowed. "After him!"

They all dashed out of the yard, hot on the heels of the fleeing SUV.

Percival aimed at the tires and fired three shots. The vehicle swerved wildly, and then, losing control, it plunged into the ocean ahead, sinking rapidly into the depths.

Percival and Vivienne reached the shoreline, staring at the now tranquil sea.

Taking a deep breath, Percival's handsome face twisted with a fierce resolve. "Dive and find him. We need him alive or confirmation he's dead."

His expression was darker than a storm cloud. Even with Vanguard Agency's tight security, Scott had slipped through their fingers.

This was a direct challenge to the Agency.

Had it not been for the risk of Vivienne getting caught in the line of fire, he would never have given Scott the chance to escape.

Chapter 399

Vivienne was the epitome of composure. If Scott lacked even the basic cunning, her mother would never have spent three years undercover by his side.

But now, the lead on Scott was a dead end.

She had hoped to use Scott to unearth the true identity of the elusive Mr. B.

"Vivienne, let's head back," Percival said, taking her hand and pulling her back to the present.

He had not expected Scott to pull the trigger so suddenly.

They had hoped to extract Mr. B's whereabouts from Scott, which was why the Vanguard Agency had surrounded him without immediately ordering his arrest.

It had, however, given Scott the chance to slip through their fingers.

Yet, despite appearances, Scott had fired a blank. Given the distance and angle, Vivienne would not have escaped unscathed even if she had been on guard.

Surely, his gun was not out of bullets.

Percival's men, who dove into the sea to search Scott, relayed the news to him while he was in the car.

The car was found, but the man was missing, leaving behind a single shoe and copious amounts of blood. The shattered window was fringed with scraps of skin tissue.

If the blood loss was as severe as it seemed, he was likely at the bottom of the sea by now.

"Keep searching," Percival commanded with a grave voice.

Having anticipated this outcome, Vivienne immediately issued an Order of Nine Mystics Society to pursue Scott.

"Mr. Wolf, take me home," Vivienne said, leaning on Percival's shoulder, her eyes weary, "I'm rather tired."

Percival draped his coat over her, saying gently, "Of course."

Vivienne closed her eyes, haunted by the image of Scott aiming the gun at her.

She had not expected him to hold his fire.

As for why, Vivienne did not care to ponder.

Regardless of his mercy, it did not erase his past intent to kill her mother.

After dropping Vivienne at the Brooks residence, Percival left.

Vivienne prepared to retire to her room when she saw Kala and paused.

Hearing that Kala had returned to work and must be busy, it surprised her to see her home for a break.

Catching the sound of the door, Kala brightened for a moment, but her expression faltered upon seeing

Vivienne.

"Vivienne, you're back," Kala said with an awkward smile.

Their relationship had lost the purity it once had.

Vivienne nodded. "Yes, and you're here as well?"

"I came to ask my folks to join me for a reality show, but no one's available... I guess it's off the table,"

Kala said, her mood dimming momentarily before she forced a laugh. "It's fine, I needed a break

anyway."

Vivienne was familiar with the show Kala mentioned, a reality series focusing on family bonds, where celebrities brought a relative to share an outdoor camping trip.

If she remembered correctly, Stephen Harris was also participating.

"The show just needs a family member, right?" Vivienne sat down across from Kala.

Kala nodded. "Yes, but everyone's busy."

"I'm not."

Kala blinked with confusion. "What?"

Vivienne raised an eyebrow playfully. "I said I'm not. If you don't think I'm suitable, just ignore my offer."

Vivienne was not one for the spotlight, but if it were not for Rainbow Entertainment being the leading producer, Kala would not even have gotten a spot in this show.

Kala's current predicament was indeed partly her doing.

Helping Kala out was no big deal, even if it meant making a public appearance.

Kala was excited yet incredulous, assuming that Vivienne might have wanted nothing to do with the Brooks family after the incident with their grandmother.

"I didn't think you were unsuitable. It's just... Never mind, I was overthinking. Vivienne, thank you," Kala said, getting up and hugging Vivienne with a hint of tears, relieved that Vivienne still considered her family.

She had forgotten those days when she could not face her grandmother's death or the fact that Vivienne had manipulated her own family.

Vivienne patted her back, "Alright, send me the schedule. I'm going to take a shower."

In a matter of sentences, their relationship seemed restored.

With the reality show starting in two days, Vivienne organized the affairs of the Order of Nine Mystics Society and left Rowan and Ismene under their watch.

Their disguise skill was too good to waste, and Draven was keen to learn.

On the set, Stephen arrived with his grandmother, Kala brought Vivienne, and another actress named Lucia came with her elder sister.

Lucia was Kala's longstanding rival; similar in image and roles, they were often pitted against each other.

But Kala's accolades left Lucia trailing in frustration. Kala had received tons of awards, and Lucia could

never catch up, no matter how hard she tried.

In the waiting room before filming began, Kala and Vivienne entered to find Lucia and her sister occupying the central seats, their bags claiming the chairs beside them as if to mark their territory.

There were six chairs in a row, with only two left on the ends, a clear challenge to their new arrivals.

Used to such pettiness, Kala thought of moving the chairs themselves.

But Vivienne simply stepped forward and asked, "Your bag?"

Lucy eyed Vivienne with a mix of disdain and curiosity. "Why do you even care?"

Lucia's sister, Lila, also chuckled, her laughter tinged with condescension. "Can't believe they let just anyone on the show nowadays. Look at her, dressed like she's from a thrift shop. As if being part of a family of criminals wasn't embarrassing enough."

Vivienne responded with a sly smile, her fingers deftly flicking her bag off the chair and onto the floor.

She then gracefully took a seat, patting the stool beside her as she said to Kala, "Take a seat."

Kala hesitated, her thoughts screaming, "Wasn't she supposed to listen to me?"

Lucy shrieked, "Do you have any idea how much that bag costs? Can you even afford to pay for the

damages if you scratched it?"

Leaning back, Vivienne crossed her legs with an air of indifference. "That rag of a thing? You think I care about the price tag on your junk?"

"You!"

At that moment, Stephen walked in with his Grandma, the ever-stylish Paloma Harris, who exuded an aura of wealth and grace.

Noticing the bag on the chair, she glanced at Lucy and Lila before saying, "My dear, that's a lovely bag you've got there. It's so pretty. You should be cuddling it in bed, not letting it collect dust on a chair."

Her words left Lucia and Lila alternating between shades of red and white, visibly shaken by the old lady's sardonic wit.

Vivienne let out a laugh. Grandma Harris was as delightfully sarcastic as ever.

Lucia, recognizing Stephen, did not dare offend him. He was a big shot, after all, someone you'd want on your good side.

Stephen was just about to greet Vivienne when her gaze stopped him cold. In an instant, he withdrew his foot, understanding the unspoken message.

He got it—his boss was here for a slice of real life.

Chapter 400

The cameras started rolling, and the reality show "Escape to the Wild" was underway.

The production team had scouted a variety of campgrounds, but it was up to the celebrity contestants

to fend for themselves when it came to food and drink. At 8:30 each evening, a live broadcast was

scheduled where fans could interact with the stars and vote for the least favorite. The one with the most

votes would end up playing butler for the next day, taking care of all the chores.

On the first day of shooting, the group worked together to set up tents and cook dinner. It just so

happened that Vivienne was not exactly an outdoorsy type.

Neither was Kala.

"Let me handle this, Granny. Why don't you sit and chat with Bo... Vivienne and the others?" Stephen,

the only guy in the group, naturally took on more of the physical tasks.

Lucia and Lila also sat down, shamelessly buttering up Paloma Harris.

"Ma'am, your skin is just radiant."

"Ma'am, being around you feels just like being with my mom. So comforting."

The old lady was baffled. These two girls were not exactly known for their integrity, but they sure had sweet tongues.

Paloma clicked her tongue. "Oh, honey, we come from a family of good looks."

Vivienne could not help but burst into laughter.

Kala quickly tugged at her. "Vivienne, stop laughing. It's not nice."

Lucia and Lila did not dare confront Paloma, so they redirected her anger toward Vivienne. "You think it's funny? A murderer's granddaughter, I'd hide my face if I were you."

Kala hung her head in shame.

But Vivienne, legs crossed nonchalantly, eyed Lucia. "Heard that the murderer gene is hereditary. Want me to give it a try tonight?"

Lucia shivered. "Are you trying to scare me? You dare say anything. Aren't you afraid of biting your tongue?"

"If you're not scared, why should I be?" Vivienne retorted coolly.

Seeing her sister outmatched, Lila chimed in. "Let's not stoop to arguing with fools. We do our part.

Justice shall prevail. Some people never change, and if it weren't for family support, they'd be nothing."

Vivienne nodded approvingly and then turned to Kala. "You hear that? We strive even though we come from a wealthy background, while some, without a leg up from daddy, turn to sugar daddies. Can't discriminate."

Lucia had recently been exposed for seeking a sugar daddy, and Vivienne's insinuation hit a nerve.

"Dare to say that again, Vivienne, and I'll tear your mouth apart!"

"Coincidence, I dare!" Vivienne's lips curled into a sly smile. "You were caught in the Atherine Inn's presidential suite with a corporate bigwig by his wife. She stripped you and dragged you from the penthouse to the lobby. It cost half a million to bury the photos, and you're here to settle that debt. Basically, he played you for free."

Lucia froze. How did Vivienne know?

When Lila saw things were going south, she blocked the camera. "You little bitch, shut up!"

Vivienne's gaze shifted. "Almost forgot about you... Using your status as Lucia's sister, you embezzled three million from her team. You rejected lucrative roles for her, costing Lucia a hit show. Oh, and another thing, it was you who exposed your sister's hotel room number for fear that people might find

out about your embezzling."

Lila went pale. "I... I..."

"Wow, so it was you! I'll start with your mouth!" In a rage, Lucia slapped Lila across the face.

Lila, blood trickling from the corner of her mouth, engaged in a full-blown fight with Lucia.

Vivienne watched with satisfaction. There was nothing better than watching a dogfight.

Kala was stunned. "Vivienne, how do you know all this?"

These were secrets meant to die with a person.

Vivienne smiled mischievously, radiant and striking. "Gossip news, your favorite, right?"

Kala was speechless. She loved gossip, but this was no ordinary scandal.

During the live broadcast that evening, Paloma let slip the catfight between the Lucia sisters. In

response, Lucia hired some online trolls to target Vivienne and Kala's broadcast with vitriol.

The trolls filled the chat with demands for Kala to leave showbiz. Vivienne, known for her sharp tongue, went into full clap-back mode.

When one troll said: [A murderer's granddaughter doesn't belong in showbiz.] Vivienne shot back, "And you do? Who's asking for you?"

Another insulted them: [Devious and despicable sisters. Aren't you afraid of karma? I hope you get struck by lightning!]

Vivienne retorted, "I'm not afraid. The lightning strikes the idle first."

Then, a lone comment in Kala's defense appeared, swarmed by trolls.

[Kala's grandmother was a murderer, but she's not. Why are you guys all so harsh on her?]

Vivienne invited the defender to a private chat and, without a word, donated a lavish virtual gift worth thousands of dollars.

The audience was stunned. Even the trolls started to change their tune.

[You think you can buy us? Don't think you can bribe everyone!]

"I'm rich, so what? What can you do?"

[I... I think Kala didn't do anything wrong. She's a good actress. I've watched her every show.]

Vivienne instantly gifted this person as well.

The trolls slowly turned to fans.

Vivienne faced the camera, her voice cold. "Kala earned every role with her talent. The intelligent ones

know it. I don't want to hear another word about her leaving showbiz."

The chat exploded with support.

[Long live Vivienne!]

[Money might make me look bad, but I'm all ears for Vivienne. Oh, and I'm a huge fan!]

[I've always been Kala's fan. Keep going!]

[Stay strong, Kala. And Vivienne, we love you!]

Moved to tears, Kala hugged Vivienne, weeping out of the camera's view.

Some trolls persisted, insinuating the money was dirty.

But the tide had turned, and Vivienne had transformed the chat with her fierce loyalty and the power of her money. They were on the side of the underdog, proclaiming their support for Kala and Vivienne, the unexpected heroes of the wild.

The screen flickered, and a name glinting with an otherworldly glow captured everyone's attention—

[SSVIP 'Vivienne's Knight in Shining Armor' has entered the chat.]

Almost immediately, 'Vivienne's Knight in Shining Armor' made their presence known with a message that lit up the screen.

[Money is no object, Vivienne. Go ahead, treat yourself.]

Instantly, the digital equivalent of a hundred grand in virtual gifts exploded across the screen.

The chat was so flooded with activity that it nearly crashed!

With that single move, a tidal wave of viewers—millions strong—swarmed into the stream, all in awe of the big shot.

Vivienne, on the other end, could only think...

“Mr. Wolf, why not just wire to my bank account? This hurts more than a Thanksgiving turkey burn!”

Then, 'Vivienne's Knight in Shining Armor' dropped another bombshell: Kala had been cast as the lead in the blockbuster project 'Betrothed Understud,' a role that was the stuff of legend.

Kala herself was gobsmacked. This project was the Holy Grail, helmed by one of the industry's finest directors, someone she had tried and failed to even get a meeting with.

"Vivienne, is this for real?"

Doubt laced Kala's voice as she pinched her own cheek, half-expecting to wake from a dream.

Vivienne nodded. "It's real. Now go out there and snag that Best Actress award."

As if on cue, Vivienne's phone buzzed with a new message.

[Vivienne, are you pleased?]