

Million-Dollar 431

Chapter 431

Vivienne locked eyes with Astrid.

There was no denying it, Astrid was stunning. She really had inherited all of Cordelia's best features.

Vivienne chuckled softly, "No need to be so formal with me, we're family."

She had uttered those words many times before, but this time, it came from the heart.

This Astrid was the one she should truly call Sister.

Astrid felt a rush of emotion. She had, in fact, used her clearance to dig into Vivienne's past. After all,

showing up after years away and causing such a stir in the Brooks family raised suspicions.

Yet, she found nothing.

Vivienne was an enigma, the more Astrid delved, the deeper she sank.

So, when they first met, Astrid had her guard up.

Later, after Vivienne's visit to Rivenwood, the Brooks family invited them for a family reunion. It was

then Astrid received a classified tip.

Alfred was a spy from a rival organization! Just when she was about to arrest Alfred, Mr. B appeared.

Collaborating with Alfred, Mr. B kidnapped her, and she had been in captivity ever since.

Each day, they injected her with a sedative that kept her unconscious for long periods, obscuring any knowledge of the outside world.

On the rare occasions she was lucid, she found herself tossed in the trunk of a car, unable to discern much else.

Vivienne passed a peeled apple to Astrid, “While you were missing, Mr. B impersonated you around us.

But don't worry, he didn't get anywhere near the core of your work, and Alfred didn't manage to steal any intel.”

Indeed, Astrid was an agent working on classified national projects, which meant she couldn't spend much time with Cordelia. Every leave request meant paperwork, waiting for notifications, and getting signatures from top to bottom.

However, those details were classified, so Cordelia remained unaware of the specific nature of Astrid's work. She only knew that Astrid’s superiors were strict, rarely approving family visits.

Initially, Alfred had approached Astrid precisely because she was a national agent, aiming to steal state secrets.

But Astrid kept her work and personal life separate. She wouldn't even discuss the news with Alfred, let alone work matters, leaving him clueless about the information he sought.

Eventually, Mr. B found Alfred, and they struck a deal.

Alfred let Mr. B get close to Vivienne, while he used the impostor Astrid to attempt to access classified materials.

Vivienne had seen through Mr. B on their second meeting. Meanwhile, Astrid's organization had been quietly informed of her abduction by Percival.

Mr. B believed he had gone undetected, falling short only in gaining access to the core secrets.

Moreover, he didn't care much, his sole objective being to get close to Vivienne and bring her to a lab for GTO to experiment with viruses.

Vivienne played along with Mr. B, pretending to be duped while investigating Astrid's whereabouts.

However, Mr. B was not easy to handle. Instead of using GTO's resources, he partnered with Fiona.

Fiona had always dealt in shady transactions for profit, but she had never done anything like human trafficking.

If not for the fact that Astrid was Vivienne's sister, she wouldn't have agreed.

Using her position within the Ellington Group, Fiona had orchestrated Astrid's transport across various vehicles, following no discernible pattern, making it difficult for anyone to trace.

This method of hiding made it challenging for anyone to readily trace or uncover clues.

When Vivienne ousted Fiona from the Ellington Group, she no longer had the transportation means to move Astrid, forcing her to use private cars.

The Nine Mystics Society figured out the general route, and Thomas blocked the vehicles at a critical moment.

Unable to identify the specific car and not daring to make a scene, they risked endangering Astrid's life.

Thus, Fiona's dramatic exit from the Ellington family was staged.

Astrid breathed a sigh of relief. Her work was vital to national security, and it could not fall into enemy hands. During her captivity, she had been worried about this very issue.

Luckily, Vivienne was shrewd.

“Vivienne, on a personal note, I thank you for your contribution to protecting national secrets. I'll

recommend you for the highest medal of honor. Without you, who knows what crisis our nation could

have faced,” Astrid said with a pale but determined expression.

Vivienne burst into laughter, “I didn't do it for the country; I just wanted to save you. As for the medal, forget it. I'm not interested.”

Astrid was taken aback. The medal was a symbol of the highest honor, coveted even among their own ranks, let alone by the general public.

And Vivienne wasn't interested!

Vivienne curved her lips into a smile. She truly didn't care for it. Her mother had plenty, Percival had his share, and she was tired of seeing them around. In a family, not everyone needs a medal of honor.

If Leopold were here, he probably would put on a scene, resulting in the following conversation:

“I want one! I can't have enough!”

Vivienne retorted, “Scram! You husky!”

Leopold grumbled, “You’re picking up Percival’s bad habits!”

Percival interjected, “What did you say?”

Leopold backpedaled, “My bad, Percival!”

Glancing at the time, Vivienne spoke, “You need time to recover and can't leave the hospital just yet. I'll

explain everything to mom. Rest up; I have things to attend to."

Astrid suddenly grabbed her hand, "Vivienne, what about Alfred?"

Vivienne knew that Astrid would surely ask about him. "The guy's been taken care of by the agency;

don't worry, he won't be getting off easy."

"Thanks," Astrid murmured, lowering her gaze. Alfred had been her first love, and though they'd never spoken of marriage, she'd given him her heart.

But to think, he was a spy for the enemy all along!

Once she was discharged from the hospital, she vowed to make Alfred's life a living hell!

After leaving the hospital, Vivienne went to see Percival.

Percival had returned from HQ with the storm clouds clearly etched across his face.

Vivienne approached, and at the sound of her footsteps, a warm glint finally appeared in Percival's eyes.

"How's it going?" Vivienne inquired. Content of Dramanovels.com

Percival's eyes narrowed, "The word is, we've got to use Mr. B to pinpoint GTO's main hub. No rash

moves allowed."

Right now, only the two of them understood the silent conversation.

Through the coded message, Vivienne asked, "What does that mean?"

"It means all my future ops must get green-lit by the brass. No more solo flights," Percival replied in kind.

But now, his wings had been clipped!

Percival wrapped an arm around Vivienne, his fingers tapping a few more coded pulses.

They exchanged a knowing smile, each with a clear understanding of the other's thoughts settled in their hearts.

Chapter 432

In a clandestine surveillance room somewhere.

Calista's wrists were bound by handcuffs, surrounded by stark white walls that seamlessly blended with the door. A shiver ran down her spine, and fear pounded in her heart.

She had been knocked unconscious by Percival and when she came to, she found herself trapped in this sterile cell, too terrified to resist.

Had her research on the viruses been discovered? Would that mean the death penalty?

No, it couldn't be!

Lost in thought, Calista was jolted back to reality by the sound of the door unlocking. Her eyes widened in alarm as she watched the door intently.

Soon after, a figure in a black trench coat entered the room. It was Mr. B, who tossed a key toward her without a word.

It was the key to her cuffs.

"Mr. B, what's going on? Where am I? Do I still have to return to the lab?"

Before she could get her bearings, Calista was met with a slap that sent her tumbling to the floor.

Blood trickled from the corner of her mouth as the blow nearly knocked her out.

"Fool, who gave you permission to collaborate with Fiona behind our backs?" Mr. B's voice was harsh and undisguised. There was no need for pretense anymore; Calista's identity had been exposed, and from now on, she could only operate under strict surveillance.

Calista was stunned. Mr. B was a woman?

Mr. B removed her hat, revealing Astrid's familiar face, the disguise still in place, "Tell me, where is

Boar Poison?"

Calista, regaining her senses, was shocked to see Mr. B's true appearance.

"You're Vivienne's sister!"

Mr. B merely rolled her eyes, "Answer my question."

Swallowing hard, Calista dared not ask further, "I... I don't know. Fiona didn't give me Boar Poison. She

said she'd hand it over at the critical moment for me to use on Vivienne. Today, I didn't receive it."

Mr. B ground her molars in frustration.

She had thought this might be the moment to seize Boar Poison, but Fiona had hidden it well.

Their past transactions involving vital goods for GTO had always depended on Fiona's dealings.

They had assumed Fiona was working alone, never suspecting she had an organization backing her,

one with the capability to acquire Boar Poison.

For years, GTO had been unable to replicate Boar Poison, especially since Karen's research had been

largely destroyed and couldn't be continued.

Now that Boar Poison had resurfaced, GTO was determined to acquire it.

Glancing at Calista on the floor, Mr. B reached out a hand.

Confused, Calista hesitated before placing her hand in Mr. B's.

With a fierce yank, Calista felt as though her arm might rip from its socket. The next instant, Mr. B had her by the neck, "Calista, do you know why I've spared you?"

A shudder ran through Calista. The gentle face before her inspired a deep-seated terror, "I... I don't know."

Mr. B's fingers tightened around Calista's throat, "I value your medical expertise. If you can't produce the Boar Poison within a month, your life becomes expendable."

Calista felt a chill run through her. She was playing with fire, one false step from annihilation.

"I will, I'll develop it, I'll definitely get it done."

A revolting smell wafted up from below, and with a few dripping sounds, Mr. B disgustedly threw Calista aside.

"TCL is no longer an option for you. You'll be taken to your new lab, remember, you only have one month."

After wiping her hands disdainfully, Mr. B turned and left.

Calista lay crumpled in a puddle of foul liquid, shedding tears of regret. Her remorse was beyond words. If only she had known Vivienne was Specter Healer, she never would have crossed her. Now, she couldn't even return to the TCL lab.

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At TCL Labs.

Percival had brought Vivienne inside.

"Mr. Percy," lab assistant Holden approached, "The director's not here, and we're not allowed in his lab."

Percival nodded, "Carry on with your work."

Holden said no more, casting a sidelong glance at the hat-wearing woman behind Percival, his heart skipping a beat.

Such a beautiful woman! But who would dare to look twice at Mr. Percy's guest?

Knowing better, Holden averted his eyes.

Percival led Vivienne to Calista's office door, which now sported a new lock.

Pulling out a magnetic card from nowhere, he slid it through the reader and with a beep, the door

unlocked.

"Mr. Wolf, you're full of surprises," Vivienne teased.

Percival pocketed the card, "It's a necessary skill when you're out in the field."

Vivienne mused about the so-called essential skills at Vanguard Agency, which apparently included

lock-picking!

Vivienne's eyes narrowed, "They're quick on their feet."

It seemed they had just removed Calista, and the bomb was already in place.

Holden didn't hesitate, quickly leading the lab staff to safety.

Percival's command was absolute, and no one dared delay.

"Vivienne, step back. I've got this," said Percival, his hand on the doorknob, careful not to make any

large movements.

If the bomb was rigged with a motion-sensitive trigger, one wrong move could spell disaster.

Vivienne raised an eyebrow, "Mr. Wolf, are you sure you're up to defusing a bomb right now?"

Percival held his breath, "I'll call Leopold for backup." Read at Dramanovels.com

"Did you forget about me?" Vivienne emerged from the lab with a pair of scissors in hand and approached Percival.

She was petite, just small enough to squeeze through the gap without disturbing the delicate balance.

Suddenly, she flashed a mischievous smile and planted a quick kiss on his face.

"Don't let it happen again."

Percival's breath hitched, nearly losing his grip—a close call to surrendering to the moment.

Vivienne slipped into the office, following the thin wire to the bomb's location.

Just as Percival had predicted, the bomb was fitted with a balance mechanism.

Even a mere centimeter of door movement could set it off!

Chapter 433

This bomb was nothing like the cutting-edge devices they'd encountered before.

This time, it was more intricate, more cunning, with an arrangement that was both deceptive and, upon closer inspection, almost childish.

Yes, that was the word—childish.

Atop the delicate balance lay a common spherical dog toy, the kind that shouldn't be nudged in the slightest. A mere touch could set the whole thing off.

But who the heck puts a dog toy on a bomb? Especially one that squeaks.

"Vivienne, what's the situation in there?" Percival could only peer through the crack in the door, unable to see the full picture.

Vivienne held a pair of scissors in her hands, the familiar sight of the wiring giving her a sense of déjà vu.

Percival, getting no response, called out again, "Vivienne?"

Vivienne shook the scissors, "All good."

She got down on her knees, scanning the rainbow of wires before snipping one decisively.

Tick!

The toy fell off the balance, rolling across the floor and ending up under the desk with a soft thunk.

"Come on in," Vivienne said, placing the scissors on the table.

The bomb wasn't inherently difficult; it just appeared dazzlingly complex. In reality, it was still the red wire.

Percival entered, realizing he was sweating bullets. He had defused a thirty-second countdown bomb

in his heyday without breaking a sweat, but this had unnerved him.

It wasn't until he heard Vivienne's voice that he understood just how frightened he'd been.

"It's not a new type of bomb, just an ordinary one with a fancy setup. Looks tough, but it's just a smoke and mirrors act."

Vivienne flashed a nonchalant smile at Percival, noticing the seriousness in his eyes and subconsciously suppressing a smirk. She looped her arms around Percival's neck, her alluring gaze warming him like the first ray of sun on a winter's day, "Mr. Wolf, what's on your mind?"

Percival pulled her into an embrace, burying his face in her neck, inhaling her reassuring scent.

Vivienne knew Percival was scared.

"It's not like we haven't been through worse."

The time Felix kidnapped the students from Class Eighteen had been far more harrowing.

A chill flashed in Percival's eyes, "I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault." Vivienne gently patted his back, "This is the enemy's tactic. I've defused it, and this little trick wasn't going to take my life."

Percival knew all too well that Vivienne was the most intelligent woman on earth. And if anyone wanted

to take her life, they'd have to get past him first.

But when Vivienne was truly in danger, his belief wavered with fear. This fear was instinctual, an innate dread of losing Vivienne.

They held each other tightly, their heartbeats slowly synchronizing.

Tick-tock... tick-tock...

An eerie ticking broke the silence in the office.

Vivienne's eyes narrowed as she located the source.

Percival crouched down, eyeing the spherical dog toy beneath the desk. It was now pressing on the actual bomb switch!

Suddenly, the supposedly defunct bomb activated a countdown, rapidly ticking down to single digits!

Even Vivienne and Percival were caught off guard, with no time to react.

"Vivienne, get out!" Percival shoved her towards the door and quickly locked the office behind him.

Vivienne pounded on the door, "Percival, open up, OPEN UP!"

In that instant, she knew what he intended to do.

He planned to shield the blast with his body, buying her time to escape.

"Percival, open the damn door!" Vivienne kicked at the lock with all her might.

But the door and lock of the TCL lab were made of top-grade materials, impervious to brute force.

Percival cradled the bomb in the far corner, using his body as a barrier.

All he wanted was to buy Vivienne a few precious seconds.

Vivienne took a deep breath and kicked at the door with all her strength!

Bang!

A cloud of smoke enveloped the office, followed by a sound akin to a popping balloon. Vivienne's

mighty kick had obliterated the sturdy lock.

She rolled on the floor from the momentum, charging through the haze towards Percival.

"Mr. Wolf!"

Percival's face was smeared with dust, his shirt torn at the chest, his hair sticking up in wild tufts.

The usually stoic and dignified Percival looked downright comical for the first time.

Yes, comical.

Vivienne was shaking with fear, staring dumbfounded at Percival.

It took them a full ten seconds to realize the truth.

This wasn't a bomb! It was just a ridiculous smoke bomb!

A banner fell from the bomb's wrapping—Congratulations, you've passed the first test.

Percival licked his lips, "First test?"

Vivienne clenched her fist, dispersing the remaining smoke with a loud curse, "Old man, you're gonna pay for this!"

There was only one person who could concoct such a diabolical bomb setup and turn it into a farce with a banner—her supposedly "late" mentor, Finnian!

Percival caught on, realizing there had been no bomb at all, just a cruel prank played out of love.

As the smoke cleared, Vivienne spotted something else on the floor, revealed by the explosion.

All the experimental data from Calista!

That was the real reason Vivienne and Percival had come to this place. Read at Drqmanovels.com

Through the analysis of these experimental data, one could infer what kind of virus GTO was researching and the connection it had with "potion."

Luckily, Finnian had the foresight to locate and duplicate the data, ingeniously hiding the copy inside a bomb.

Percival let out a sigh of relief, "All's well that ends well."

Vivienne ground her teeth in frustration, "Not so fast. That old man thinks he can play me for a fool?

He's got another thing coming."

"That old coot, he's a real tormentor, just like his infamous disciples," she mused.

Percival couldn't help but chuckle; his little spitfire was just too endearing.

Chapter 434

The research data from the TCL Labs had been recovered, but Calista was MIA, and still, the experiments had to go on. This place had become too hot to handle.

The GTO had discovered their location, and who knew what Calista might reveal under pressure.

There was no choice left but to torch the place.

The ongoing projects in the lab would have to be shelved for the time being.

After Percival and Vivienne stepped out of the lab, they made sure all the researchers were sent to a safe haven while they scouted for a new spot to restart their work.

On the drive back, Vivienne leaned against Percival's shoulder, her gaze heavy with thoughts that were

her own.

Percival soothingly stroked her back without a word. He knew better than to interrupt Vivienne when she was deep in thought.

Suddenly, Percival's work phone buzzed with a message.

It was from employees at the Ellington Group.

[Mr. Ellington, Henry is demanding that all of Fiona's shares be transferred to his name.]

Vivienne's eyes narrowed slightly, "Your uncle sure can't sit still."

A cold smirk played on Percival's lips, "A mere jester."

Thomas glanced at the notification on the phone and said, "Percival, Henry has gone to the old family estate. Shall we head back?"

Percival gently pinched Vivienne's cheek, articulating every word, "Vivienne, what do you think?"

Her lips curved into a sly smile, "Of course we're going back. We've got a little surprise for them."

"Then let's go!" Percival's eyes twinkled with a mix of mischief and malice.

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At the Ellington family estate.

Richard sat at the head of the table, watching his second son and his family wail before him.

"Dad, now that Fiona's been locked up and they won't tell us why, you have to take our side!" Heloise sobbed, her tears not entirely genuine, laced as they were with self-interest.

Henry, bandaged and hobbling, chimed in, "Right, Dad, with Fiona in custody, we don't know what the outcome will be. You can't just ignore this."

Jeffrey, not in the best of health himself, was brought in by Henry and Heloise. He half-collapsed on the couch, wailing pitifully.

Heloise let out a howl, "Dad, look at what Percival and Vivienne have reduced our family to. You can't let this go on; we need justice!"

Richard replied coolly, "Isn't it what you deserve?"

Henry looked at his father in disbelief, "Dad, what are you talking about? How can you say we deserve this?"

"Embarrassing Vivienne in public at my birthday bash and making a scene when I was ill. If you don't get a thrashing, who will?" Richard regarded them as if they were fools.

Henry muttered a curse under his breath. He should've known his father would side with Percival. It was clear that words wouldn't work; actions were needed.

Henry, comically adorned with a neck brace, presented a document to his father. "Dad, if you're not going to punish Percival, let's not dwell on it. Just sign this, and we'll be out of your hair."

Richard glanced at the document—a share transfer agreement.

They were after Fiona's shares.

"The company matters are Percival's call," Richard said, nonchalantly cleaning his ears.

At that moment, Percival and Vivienne walked in, casting a chilling look at the second family branch of the Ellington family.

"Forget about the shares. All of Fiona's assets are frozen. You won't get a dime," Percival declared, tossing the share agreement into the trash can.

Heloise glared venomously at Percival but didn't dare to approach, hiding behind Henry instead,

"Percival, there's a limit to your bullying. By holding onto Fiona's shares, are you trying to make us beggars?"

"What's it to me?" Percival retorted indifferently.

Jeffrey, silent throughout, had been recording everything. After a quick edit, the narrative changed entirely.

Soon, a video went viral, causing a stir online.

[Scandal in the Ellington family! Young Master Percival humiliates his uncle in public, forcing their family to beg!]

In Rivenwood, anything connected to the Ellingtons was big news. Percival's image took a hit because of the video.

[Is this high society drama? So wealthy, yet so stingy. Disgusting.]

[What do you mean stingy? It's rightfully the second branch's money. Looks like Percival wants to hoard all the Ellington wealth.]

[People can be deceiving. Poor Vivienne, to end up with someone so heartless.]

The internet was abuzz with comments, creating a minor sensation.

Jeffrey, satisfied with the uproar, had gotten the effect he wanted.

Even Percival had to care about his image. A tarnished reputation could affect Ellington Group's stock

prices.

Jeffrey thought to himself, "When the time comes, Grandpa will surely rethink his choice of heir!"

At that moment, Richard's phone chimed a few times with the rare notification of an email.

Upon opening the email, the initially smiling face turned ashen.

Henry, oblivious to the unfolding drama, continued to press Percival for shares in the business.

Startled, Henry glanced at his own inbox to find an email brimming with evidence of his corruption and

bribery. Read at Dramanovels.com

"Dad, let me explain, it's not what it looks like..." he started.

But before he could finish, agents from the Internal Revenue Service were at the Ellington's grand

entrance.

"Henry Ellington, I presume? Someone's reported you for tax evasion. Please come with us."

Heloise was completely baffled, clueless about the situation at hand.

Meanwhile, Jeffrey discovered that an unedited video of him had surfaced online. It was the raw

footage he had just recorded.

The video laid bare Henry and Heloise's greedy facades for all to see.

Jeffrey looked up just in time to see Vivienne giving her phone a little shake in his direction.

What goes around comes around, after all.

Chapter 435

Jeffrey had always been a hothead, and Vivienne's challenge sent him over the edge.

In a fit of rage, he hurled his phone at her, shouting, "Are you behind all this crap?"

Vivienne merely glanced at the phone lying on the floor, her elegant features cool and detached. She

did not move an inch, just quietly observing Jeffrey.

At that moment, Percival stepped forward and crushed Jeffrey's phone underfoot, swiftly turning it into

a heap of electronic waste.

The next second, Jeffrey found himself unable to move. Panic crossed his face. "Vivienne, what the

hell did you do to me?" His eyes bore into hers, but other than his eyes and his mouth, nothing else in

his body responded to his mind.

With a casual flick of her hair behind her ear, Vivienne replied indifferently, "An eye for an eye. You

have a problem with that?"

"You!"

Before Jeffrey could retort, Vivienne's fingers twitched, and a silver needle flew from her fingertips.

Jeffrey's words were instantly cut off.

Seeing the scene unfold, Henry realized his options were dwindling. The only path left was to plead

with his father, Richard.

He dropped to his knees before Richard, begging, "Dad! I messed up. Please give me another chance.

I swear I'll never do this again. I can't go to jail!

I just wasn't thinking, Dad. Please, for all the years I've dedicated to our family business, forgive me

this once."

He knew the gravity of his situation.

The money he had embezzled over the years was enough to land him behind bars!

Richard placed his cane down and slowly sat on the couch, his aged face void of expression. "As of

today, you are no longer welcome at the company, and don't you dare show your face in this house

again!"

Henry felt as though he had been struck by lightning.

Was Richard casting him out from the Ellington family?

What about the tax authorities?

Could he even get out of this?

"Dad, I'm your son! Fiona's still suffering, Jeffrey's still sick, and we have no means of income. You can't just kick me out, Dad!"

Henry clung to Richard's leg, wailing.

But Richard pushed him away. "If it weren't for this mess, would you still be here begging me? All of you, get out! I never want to see you again!"

Heloise was dumbfounded. Her son was a wreck on the sofa, her husband was to be taken away, and her daughter was still in jail. The future looked bleak.

Heloise's heart hardened when her eyes landed on Vivienne, sitting there with a faint smile. She grabbed a vase from the table and hurled it at Vivienne.

"You little wretch, this is all your fault! I'll kill you!"

With a swift kick, Vivienne sent her flying.

Heloise landed on the broken vase, a shard slicing a long gash across her face. She always prized her

beauty, and now, disfigured, she felt worse than dead.

She looked at the blood in her hands and screamed, "Ah! My face!"

Vivienne frowned at the noise.

So annoying.

Another silver needle flew out with a flick of her wrist, silencing Heloise's cries.

Vivienne cleared her ears.

Much better.

Why could it not always be this quiet?

And so, a bizarre scene unfolded in the Ellington household. There was crying without tears, bleeding without sound, their mouths agape but silent.

Richard barely glanced at Heloise before addressing the tax officials. "Officers, my son has broken the law, and the Ellington family will not shield a criminal. Take him away."

The officials stepped forward and escorted Henry out.

Heloise tried to intervene, but her face ached, and her voice was gone; she could only watch as Henry

was taken away.

Once the tax officials and Henry had left, Percival gestured to the servants to remove Heloise and Jeffrey.

Quickly, they were dragged out of the house.

With the troublesome people gone, peace returned to the Ellington home.

Richard, red-faced and fuming, took his time to recover on the sofa.

Vivienne approached, pressing acupuncture points on Richard's hand to help him relax.

"Vivienne, my dear, we owe you a great debt today. If not for you, who knows how long that ungrateful son of mine might have kept me in the dark!" Richard thought of Henry's misdeeds and felt his blood pressure rise again.

He had known about Henry and his brother Ryan's sneaky dealings, but since the sums were insignificant, he had let it slide.

After all, Isolde's face was disfigured because of the poison aimed at Percival; Percival wanted to keep a low profile; Richard was old, and his ideas were outdated. All of these reasons combined, Richard had decided to leave the business in the hands of his three sons.

He trusted Nathan implicitly and had given him the reins of the company, while Henry and Ryan were

kept away from crucial positions. To Richard, a little mischief was tolerable.

In a family as large as the Ellingtons, some were bound to be not exactly angels.

Richard knew his sons' true colors but just could not be bothered.

Yet he never imagined Henry would embezzle such a staggering amount.

Vivienne's lips pursed slightly, a hint of remorse in her eyes. "I'm glad you don't blame me, Grandpa."

There were not many whom she did not want to hurt, and Richard was one of them.

"Blame you? Far from it, I should thank you for excising a tumor from the company and the Ellington

family." Richard genuinely held no grudges against Vivienne.

The money Henry had stolen could have supported a small company.

Now that trouble had arisen, it was nothing less than their just desserts.

Vivienne remained silent, choosing not to comment.

"Percival," Richard sighed deeply, "I want those bad debts cleaned up. Take care of it, will you?" He

sounded weary. "I'm exhausted. I'm going to take a break."

Vivienne and Percival watched as Richard retreated to his bedroom.

Afterward, they left the Ellington estate. New chapter available on Dramanovels.com

On the road, Percival made calls to have Henry's mess sorted out.

He had not needed that 10 billion dollars and could have managed without Vivienne's help, but since she had insisted, he had accepted it.

Henry's accounts were straightforward enough to settle, but Fiona was a more complex problem.

Fiona had been conducting shady deals in the shadows, creating an illicit network that stretched from Ellington Group to Jeffrey's art gallery.

However, Fiona was stubborn and had not yet revealed any of her secrets.

Seeing Percival's grim expression, Vivienne inquired, "Is it that difficult to handle?"

Vivienne paused, then said, "CK? I've heard of them before."

Chapter 436

As soon as Vivienne finished speaking, Percival and Leopold both paused for a beat.

Leopold, who was driving, quickly asked, "Vivienne, what exactly does this organization do?"

He was aware of the situation with Fiona but had never heard of this organization before, so he was trying to get his head around it.

“It’s similar to the Frostfire Intelligence Agency,” Vivienne explained. “They take on tasks assigned by clients – finding people, finding objects, all sorts of stuff. Paula once tried to hire CK to find her daughter, but CK didn’t take the job.

But CK... They don’t have any lines they won’t cross. If the price is right, they’ll even deal in human trafficking, like Fiona did when she hid Astrid for Mr. B. Fiona claimed it was her first time, but it certainly wasn’t CK’s first rodeo.”

Leopold caught on. “So, the baby trafficking cases from before, they had CK’s fingerprints all over them.”

“Exactly,” Vivienne replied, her expression darkening.

CK was a group that had risen to prominence in the past few years, a bit later than the Frostfire Intelligence Agency.

However, because they played by no rules, some individuals with sinister motives sought them out. For their own gain, they would harm other people’s families and their lives.

Thus, CK was more popular in the underworld.

Percival's deep eyes narrowed as his voice dropped an octave. "Fiona only claimed she was the head of CK and did everything herself."

"She's contradicting herself." Leopold clicked his tongue. "She said that the Astrid thing was her first time dealing in human trafficking, but we know for a fact that CK has trafficked infants before. How could it be the first time?"

"She's not telling the truth," Percival murmured, his long fingers tapping slowly on the windowpane.

After a moment, he spoke again, "Let's head to the safe house."

Leopold nodded, stepping on the gas as they headed toward the safe house.

Fiona was rather comfortable there, rising punctually each day, passing her free time with books, newspapers, and the news. When questioned, she repeated the same few lines.

She claimed she was the leader of CK, did not know who Mr. B was, and that all transactions were through the Ellington Group and Jeffrey's art gallery.

Percival entered, finding Fiona absorbed in a painting by Eulalia, or in other words, by Vivienne.

Hearing Percival approach, Fiona barely lifted her eyelids, but upon seeing Vivienne, there was a flicker of response.

“Vivienne, could I trouble you for something?” Fiona asked.

“Speak,” Vivienne replied nonchalantly, hands in her pockets.

After a moment of silence, Fiona looked up. “I would like to see all of your previous design drafts.”

Vivienne raised an eyebrow, not knowing what to say.

Was Fiona treating this place like her personal study?

Vivienne’s lips curved into a smirk as she said, “Sure, but it’ll cost you.”

“What do you want?” Fiona’s eyes shimmered with a hint of hope upon Vivienne’s agreement.

Vivienne’s eyes sparkled mischievously. “I could want a lot of things. Money? Strawberry cheesecake?

Rare herbs? Or perhaps...”

Her gaze lifted slightly, the smile on her lips growing. “Information on Black Dragon, the elusive head of

CK.”

Fiona’s gaze stalled at the mention of Black Dragon.

Black Dragon was the code name for CK’s boss.

No one had ever managed to find any information about him.

Even Percival, despite having captured and interrogated her for so long, had not found any information about the leader, even though Fiona claimed to be the head of CK.

But Vivienne seemed to know.

Fiona looked up. "You found out?"

Vivienne laughed, a dazzling smile on her face. "Is it hard to find information on a leader of a shady organization?"

After a pause, Fiona replied, "Since you're so informed, there's no need to ask me. Besides, I wouldn't tell you even if you did."

Vivienne leaned back in her chair, legs crossed, chin propped on her hand. "I'm not planning on asking you. However, if you want my designs, you must give me something in exchange."

Fiona stayed silent for quite some time before looking up. "Anything else I can give, just not information about Black Dragon."

Vivienne propped her chin with her arms on her legs, pondered for a while, then said, "I don't seem to need anything."

Fiona was speechless, thinking, "Then why are you wasting my time?"

Vivienne turned and glanced at Percival, asking with a faint smile, “Mr. Wolf, what do I need? Can you remind me?”

Percival’s lips twitched. His Vivienne’s knack for infuriating people seemed as powerful as ever.

Then, he brought over a chair and sat next to Vivienne, his long fingers entwining with hers, his voice smooth as velvet, “My Vivienne has everything she needs. She lacks nothing!”

Vivienne nodded in agreement but said, “No, wait! I have to pay for your expenses. You’re too high-maintenance. I can’t afford you no matter how rich I am.”

“I’m not high-maintenance. Just make me spaghetti from time to time.”

Vivienne’s eyes lit up. “That I can do.”

Fiona was at a loss for words, yelling inside, “Enough! I don’t want to see you two showing off your love!”

As if Vivienne had heard Fiona’s inner thoughts, she turned to her and said, “Though I have everything I need, my designs are numerous. You need them, White Tiger doesn’t, but you’re useless to me, while White Tiger could be. So, what shall we do?”

Fiona was startled, her emotions betraying her control for a moment. "You know about White Tiger!"

White Tiger was a code name known only to her, the true mastermind behind CK.

Black Dragon and White Tiger were the highest authorities in CK, and all orders filtered down from

White Tiger to the rest.

Black Dragon was the face of the operation, the one who stepped into the light when necessary.

And Black Dragon was her code name.

Fiona bit her lip, her eyes wide with shock that refused to diminish.

How much influence did Vivienne wield to have information on White Tiger?

Who on earth was she?

Before Vivienne could finish, Fiona suddenly shouted, "Enough!"

Her fingers were clenched tightly, and her expression was twisted with distress.

She never imagined Vivienne would unearth her secrets with such clarity.

If Vivienne knew, then Percival... Content belongs to Dramanovels.com

Her gaze shifted to Percival, who sat with his legs crossed, idly toying with Vivienne's fingers, his

expression unchanging as if he had long been aware of these machinations.

Fiona's laugh broke the tension abruptly.

Ha!

She had schemed for so long and had operated in the shadows, only to find herself ensnared in his strategies. She had thought her disguise was impeccable!

Of course! Her cousin, Percival, was leagues beyond the likes of Jeffrey.

After spending so much time with her family, she had almost forgotten that Percival controlled a vast financial empire and was known to others as Mr. Percy!

No wonder everything had gone so smoothly before and why she had failed so spectacularly this time!

After a brief pause, she added a stipulation, "You may ask, but I'm not obliged to tell."

Vivienne met her gaze squarely, cutting through the pretense, "Is the Boar Poison in White Tiger's possession?"

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Fiona remained silent for a long time, and Vivienne did not rush her, simply waiting with patient stillness.

Finally, Fiona showed a hint of response.

“Yes.” Fiona’s lips curved slightly. “Vivienne, that’s all I can tell you. As for who White Tiger is and where he might be, I’m clueless. You’ll have to dig that up yourself.”

With that, Fiona closed her eyes.

Vivienne knew that Fiona would not divulge White Tiger’s whereabouts.

Just as stubborn as Scott, she thought.

Vivienne handed her earlier design sketches to Fiona. “Study these well. I’m looking forward to seeing you outdo my jewelry designs here.”

Fiona opened her eyes, her gaze flat. She lowered her eyes with a smile, “For the sake of your sketches, maybe you’ll find something worthwhile among my belongings.”

Vivienne raised an eyebrow, gave Fiona a lingering look, and left with Percival.

Ever since Fiona’s arrest, all her possessions had been under Percival’s control.

They had scoured through everything Fiona owned. And found nothing.

“Could you have missed something?” Vivienne asked.

Percival shook his head. “No, I had everything Fiona owned under surveillance before her arrest – from her bank accounts and stocks to her purse and car; it’s all here.”

Leopold had also gone through everything from top to bottom, unable to find any clue, let alone White Tiger's location.

Vivienne stared at the pile of belongings for a while, then suddenly said, "Let's find Jeffrey!"

Almost at the same moment, Percival also uttered, "Jeffrey!"

The two exchanged a knowing smile.

Shortly after, they went straight to find Jeffrey.

...

At a certain bar.

Jeffrey had mostly recovered now that Henry was behind bars and the art gallery was closed due to Fiona's case.

With no source of income, he had given himself over to despair.

Spending his days in the bar, when he ran out of money, he would sell something to continue his spree.

Percival found him in a drunken stupor.

Vivienne injected him with something, and Jeffrey immediately sobered up.

“What are you doing? I... I’m not afraid of you!” Jeffrey crouched on the ground, terrified Vivienne might jab him again.

Percival hoisted him up, his voice stern. “Where are the things Fiona gave you?”

Jeffrey blinked, confused. “What are you talking about?”

“The stuff Fiona bought you, where is it all?” Percival was losing patience.

If they did not find White Tiger soon, there would be no lead on Boar Poison.

If Boar Poison resurfaced, its danger was unimaginable.

Isolde had suffered enough because of Boar Poison, and he would not let anyone close to him suffer because of it again.

Even with Vivienne there, the threat of Boar Poison could not be underestimated.

Jeffrey shivered, “It’s mine. You can’t take it away from me!”

Percival’s grip tightened on Jeffrey’s shoulder. “Not talking, huh?”

In pain, Jeffrey gasped. “I sold them, sold everything.”

Percival’s eyes narrowed. “To whom?”

“Just some friends and buyers I met at art shows.” Jeffrey spilled everything he could remember to

Percival. "The rest is still at my place. Take it if you want."

He could not afford to cross these two again.

After checking Fiona's transfer records against Jeffrey's collection of sports cars and antiques, Percival

surveyed Jeffrey's warehouse, his expression unreadable. "There's a painting missing."

Still crouched, held down by Leopold, Jeffrey glanced at the wall of antiques. "That, I gave it away."

"You're this broke, and you're giving gifts? One painting could keep you throwing money around for six months. Stop talking nonsense." Leopold smacked Jeffrey on the head.

Jeffrey yelped, "I really gave it away. Met a lady at the bar, made me happy, so I gave it to her, okay?"

"A lady?" Vivienne frowned slightly. "What did she look like?"

Jeffrey pulled out his phone, showing a video of the woman pole dancing.

Her seductive appearance would tempt any man.

And Jeffrey was no exception.

"She cheered me up that night, and I took her home. She liked that painting, so I gave it to her."

Percival and Vivienne exchanged a look.

It was Mr. B.

It seemed Mr. B was also on the hunt for Boar Poison.

Jeffrey, the fool, had given away something so crucial!

Percival's foot sent Jeffrey flying.

Jeffrey's recently healed body now had two broken ribs. He was livid, wanting to curse his fate.

Percival and Vivienne were mad people!

Meanwhile, Mr. B had unraveled the secret of the painting. She dialed a number.

"White Tiger? I have a proposal. Are you interested in a collaboration?"

A deep chuckle came from the other end, "Is this Mr. B? Black Dragon mentioned you. We should meet."

Mr. B was taken aback; she had not expected White Tiger to agree so readily and even take the initiative.

"Sure, let's set a place."

The call ended abruptly, and Mr. B, listening to the dial tone, smirked.

True to CK's reputation, White Tiger knew quite a bit.

However, she had to get her hands on the Boar Poison antidote.

After leaving Jeffrey's apartment, Vivienne headed home.

Astrid was already recuperating at home; her health was much improved, but the poison had damaged her lungs, causing her to cough frequently and appear somewhat frail.

"Vivienne, you're back, cough cough," Astrid coughed as she made her way to the couch.

Vivienne glanced at Astrid. "Still haven't recovered?"

Astrid nodded. "Just a bit of a cough, it's nothing."

Vivienne checked Astrid's pulse and retrieved a needle from her medical bag. "Lie down."

"Eh?" Astrid was momentarily taken aback.

A few drops of dark blood oozed from the acupuncture points, quickly turning red.

Astrid felt the heaviness in her chest had disappeared instantly, her breathing much more comfortable.

"All done," Vivienne said as she removed the needle, patting Astrid on the back. "Get up."

Astrid sat up, took a couple of deep breaths, and felt no urge to cough.

"Vivienne, you're a miracle worker. The tightness in my chest is gone, and I don't feel the need to

cough anymore."

Chapter 438

Vivienne chuckled softly, "Just a small issue. Drink more water, and cut down on soft drinks. The toxins might be flushed out, but don't overlook the aftereffects. Keep hydrating to wash away any remnants."

"Thanks, Vivienne," Astrid replied, pouring Vivienne a glass of water. "I'll be heading back to work at the office in a few days. I'm going to need you to keep an eye on things at home. It's been..."

"No need for a speech," Vivienne interjected as Astrid started to get sentimental.

Astrid grinned. "What can I do? You're just too lovable. Even chatting with you feels like a breath of fresh air."

Sometimes, she wondered if she had saved the galaxy in a past life since this lifetime had blessed her with such a wonderful sister.

She could not be there to care for her parents or look after her little brother Thaddeus properly. Without

Vivienne, she was at a loss.

And this time, if not for Vivienne, she might have... Well, she might not have made it at all.

As an agent for the National Security Bureau, she was acutely aware of the grim fate awaited someone

like her if captured by enemy spies.

If not for Mr. B needing her DNA to conceal her identity and Alfred wanting to wring state secrets from her, she would have been silenced long ago.

Their last attempt to transfer her was meant to be the end of her. Her hair and eyes were more than sufficient to get her DNA.

If Vivienne had not found her in time, she would have faced not just death but the horror of being left unrecognizable.

Vivienne tapped her wrist lightly. "If you feel awkward about it, how about we pull some strings? What do you say?"

Astrid paused for a moment. "Pull some strings?"

"Yeah," said Vivienne, her eyes twinkling mischievously.

"What are you up to, Vivienne?" Astrid asked, puzzled.

Vivienne pulled out a document from her bag, an idea she had had since leaving the TIC Research Institute.

She had yet to find the right opportunity to implement it.

But with Astrid's connections, they could surely find the perfect place.

Astrid glanced over the document and declared, "I'll report this to our superiors right away."

Her decisiveness outpaced even Cordelia. Before Vivienne could respond, Astrid was already on the phone with her boss.

Vivienne could not help but laugh somewhat helplessly.

She realized where Thaddeus got his slow nature—it was all Dorian's influence.

Astrid definitely took after Cordelia.

Astrid returned quickly with what Vivienne needed. "Vivienne, the boss says your idea is solid. The country will definitely back it up. We'll provide the location for free, but all findings must comply with national regulations and pass through the National Security Bureau. Do you agree?"

"Agreed," Nodded Vivienne.

Her research was always meant for the nation; she had no intention of keeping it for herself.

She stowed away her belongings and said, "I should get going."

Percival was waiting outside and escorted her to the car.

Today, he was in a particularly good mood, a smile playing on his lips.

He reached into the back and presented Vivienne with a box of strawberry cake.

No matter how many times she saw it, Vivienne's eyes lit up at the sight of the cake.

"Mr. Wolf, I won't just take your cake for nothing. I'll trade you this," she said, handing over the item she held.

Percival opened it and chuckled. "Only you know me so well."

He had been planning to relocate the TCL lab, and Vivienne had already found the perfect spot!

While enjoying the cake, Vivienne said, "I want to merge the TCL lab with the YQ lab. Our research directions are the same; there's no need for two separate facilities.

This is the lab secured through Astrid's superiors. The nation will oversee the results directly, but the credit will still go to the lab. The specifics are in the contract—take a look, okay?"

She was intent on fulfilling her mother's last wishes, to complete the research she had left unfinished.

As for everything else, it mattered little to her.

Percival thought of his mentor, feeling a twinge of sadness.

After his mentor's passing, he set up the TCL lab to carry on her research and ensure the medical

advancements she made would endure.

Merging TCL with YQ would mean more powerful medical technologies and more resources.

More importantly, it would have the nation's endorsement, keeping outside interference at bay.

Percival would not need to rely on upper-level approvals to keep the lab afloat.

"Vivienne, you've got a great idea," Percival said, about to pull her close when she turned, swiftly

polishing off the last of the cake.

Percival thought, "Do I look like I'm after your cake?"

Vivienne's silent response was, "Yes, definitely."

She swallowed the last bite. "Mr. Wolf, I traded you for this."

Percival sighed silently. Suddenly, noticing the trace of cream on her lips, he leaned in and kissed it

gently.

The taste of cream and the sweetness of strawberries could not compare to the unique flavor of

Vivienne herself.

Looking at Vivienne's radiant cheeks, Percival felt a surge of affection. It took all his willpower to

restrain himself.

His lady was still young; he could not be so beastly.

From the driver's seat, Leopold thought in exasperation, "And you call yourself civilized? My Vivienne, our goddess, and here you are besmirching her!"

Vivienne blinked and looked into Percival's eyes.

Suddenly, she lunged forward, pinning him against the car window, and kissed him fervently.

Leopold discreetly lowered the privacy screen.

"I can't stand being Vivienne and Percival's chauffeur anymore! I just can't!"

Leopold pulled up to Elite University.

Today was the day Elite University broke for summer vacations.

"Hey, girl, did you call for a ride?" Leopold rolled down the window, giving Anna a whistle.

Anna shot him a cool glance. "Can I file a complaint? Since when can husky be chauffeurs?"

Vivienne rolled down her window, too. "Get in." Content of Dramanovels.com

Seeing Vivienne, the frostiness on Anna's face melted away. She walked around the car and sat on the passenger seat.

But Vivienne's gaze lingered, landing on Aaron, who was approaching from a distance.

"Vivienne!" Aaron greeted her with a thrilled voice.

Percival just stood there, silent.

This kid was so persistent!

"Vivienne, what brings you here?" Aaron asked with a half-bow, smiling at her.

His eyes seemed to see no one else but her.

"I came to meet a friend." Vivienne glanced over and noticed the Brooks family's car not too far away.

It was Ronald and Mark.

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Vivienne nodded. The Brooks family's affairs were no longer of her concern. However, if they came

knocking on her door one day seeking help, she would not turn a blind eye.

If they did not, well, then it was live and let live.

Ronald caught Vivienne's gaze, and his expression flickered with oddness for a split second before he

resumed his composure and nodded at her in greeting.

Mark, still playing it cool with Vivienne, showed no reaction.

"Let's go, we're off," Vivienne said, waving Aaron away.

Aaron responded, "Hey Vivienne, we should grab a..."

Before he could finish suggesting a meal, Percival rolled up the car window with a quick twist and

kicked the seat in front of him. "Drive."

Leopold jumped, wondering what the sudden outburst was about, but did not dare to ask; he just

silently started the car.

Vivienne sighed, "Mr. Wolf, do you have something against Aaron?"

Percival, feigning indifference, replied, "No, Leopold closed the window."

"Huh?" Leopold yelped, catching Percival's warning glance in the rear-view mirror, and quickly nodded

in agreement, "Ah yes, yes, my fault, Vivienne. You should totally chew me out."

Maybe a good scolding would get him out of driving duties!

Where the heck had Thomas, that little rascal, run off to?

He should be back driving now that he had recovered from his sickness, right?

Had he not been back at work just a couple of days ago?

Thomas's inner thoughts were, "Training the newbie, do not disturb."

Aaron watched the car fade into the distance, his hopeful gaze sinking slowly.

He knew he had no right to stand beside Vivienne just yet.

Everything would have to wait.

Mark walked over with Ronald and asked, "Hey kid, what was Vivienne doing here?"

Aaron's gaze dropped, "Just meeting a friend."

"Oh, I saw a girl getting into her car. A classmate of yours?" Mark's eyes trailed off in the direction the car had disappeared, thoughtful.

"I don't know her; I didn't see what she looked like," Aaron said, adjusting his backpack. "Aren't we supposed to be heading to a party?"

The truth was, he had seen Anna. They were both finance majors; of course, he knew her.

But they barely spoke at school, only exchanging a few words when grouped for an assignment. After the project, there was no further interaction.

But when Mark asked, he just could not be bothered to explain.

However, the fact that Anna knew Vivienne was a surprise to him.

He had always thought Anna was a loner with hardly any friends.

Seeing Aaron a bit impatient, Mark did not push further and left with Ronald to head out from Elite University.

In Vivienne's car, Anna pulled out a certificate. It was issued by the Elite University's School of Medicine.

"You've become a professional doctor?" Vivienne was surprised to see the certificate.

She knew Anna's mother, Daphne, had been a right-hand woman to Karen, with her incredible achievements in the medical field.

But Vivienne did not expect Anna to follow in those footsteps, too.

Leopold thought inwardly, "Vivienne, you've mastered all of your mother's skills; is it so hard for Anna to inherit just one thing?"

"Yeah, I took the exams in my spare time. Right now, I'm only a certified doctor; I'm not yet skilled enough to engage in research," Anna said, removing her black-rimmed glasses to reveal her bright eyes.

Vivienne smiled. "You want to work in a lab?"

Anna nodded. "Yes, my mom mentioned she worked on many research projects with Lark. I want to fulfill her legacy and learn while doing so. Could you take me to the lab just to have a look?"

"Not yet." Vivienne handed the certificate back to Anna. "At least, not right now."

Anna was puzzled. "Why? The Husky can drive."

"That's because he has a driver's license. You said it yourself—you're not yet skilled enough for research. At the very least, you need to master the experimental techniques before I can let you into the lab."

Being ambitious was good, but steady progress was vital.

One could not expect to run before one could walk.

Anna's lips pressed slightly, her eyes dimming as she whispered, "But time waits for no one. If I'm studying, I can't focus fully on research. There's only so much time during vacations, and I'm afraid..."

Afraid that the GTO would make its move before she was ready.

Percival took Vivienne's hand, his fingertips gently caressing the back of it, "You could start by reporting to the Vanguard Agency's boot camp. If you pass our training, you'll be assigned to the YQ lab."

"YQ lab? You restarted the YQ lab!" Anna's eyes brightened.

Percival nodded. "Yeah, but you'll have to follow Vivienne's lead inside the lab. She's the director of the YQ lab."

Anna considered it momentarily before saying, "No problem, take me to the boot camp!"

She was eager to get into the lab by any means necessary to pick up where her mother left off.

Leopold reluctantly turned the car around. "Captain, can I apply for the boot camp too? I bet I'm way better than Thomas. Could his trainees even compare to me?"

He mainly just wanted to get out of driving.

Anna did not like hearing that at all. She certainly did not want a Husky for a drill sergeant.

Percival glanced at Leopold and said, "She doesn't want you as a drill sergeant."

"How would you know without asking?" Leopold challenged, turning to Anna, "What do you say, me as your drill sergeant?"

Anna coughed lightly. "I think driving suits you."

Leopold was at a loss for words.

Everyone's always picking on him!

In the midst of their conversation, Leopold steered the vehicle into the driveway of the Vanguard

Agency's boot camp for recruits. Read at Dramanovels.com

The facility was not far from the city center; from the outside, it looked like any other nondescript compound.

But outsiders did not know that inside lay a myriad of training grounds, covering everything from physical fitness and firearms to courses designed to fortify the mind.

At every stage of training, a batch of recruits would be eliminated. Even if someone excelled in physical and weapons training, they were out if they could not cut it mentally.

And those who did not make the cut had to keep the secrets of the camp to themselves. Disclosure meant facing the consequences far more severe than a mere military tribunal.

Thomas had received word that Percival was en route and was waiting at the gate to greet him.

"Percival and Ma'am," Thomas called out, stepping forward as the car pulled to a halt.

They were so used to seeing Thomas in a suit that his combat attire took them by surprise.

Vivienne nodded her approval. "Thomas does look rather dashing in his gear."

Chapter 440

Thomas was taken aback, his eyes darting towards Percival.

"Ma'am, you're practically signing my death warrant here!" He yelled inside.

"Percival, hear me out. This is the training grounds. I have to be in combat gear. I am the Chief

Instructor, and I can't very well train them in a suit and tie!"

Percival's eyes briefly swept over Thomas's attire without a word, instead wrapping his arm around

Vivienne, and they made their way deeper into the training area.

For a few seconds, Thomas felt like he just walked through the valley of the shadow of death.

Leopold slapped Thomas on the back with a smirk, "Man, that gear does look sharp on you, though."

Thomas shot him a glare that could kill and kicked out at him half-heartedly, then quickly caught up with

Percival.

"Percival, the training's halfway through. If we're bringing in the newbie, we might need to fast-track

her."

Thomas implied that Anna had to pass the earlier assessment today if she wanted to keep her spot

here.

Percival's stern face held a grave expression as he said, "Let's begin now."

Neither Vivienne nor Anna had any objections.

It was only fair.

If Anna could not pass the earlier assessments, it only proved she did not have the mettle to stay.

"Captain."

Off in the distance, a man in an olive-drab tee approached, saluting Percival crisply.

This was Soren, the physical training examiner.

After exchanging pleasantries with Percival, Soren sized up Vivienne. Then his gaze landed on Anna.

"So you're the little lady who waltzed in through the back door?"

His tone was less than friendly, and his eyes were full of disdain.

Thomas signaled to him discreetly, whispering, "Soren, watch the attitude."

"Come on, man, she's Ma'am's protégé. Besides, it's not like she wanted the shortcut. If she can't make

the cut, even Percival won't keep her here. Don't be so aggressive, or you might just tick off Percival!"

He thought, trying to signal Soren with his eyes.

But Soren acted as if he saw and heard nothing, continuing his spiel to Anna. "I'm the physical training

instructor. We will start your assessment now. If you don't make it, beat it, and I don't care who brought you here."

His words were clearly directed at Vivienne.

Leopold, noticing Soren's target, stepped forward angrily, "Soren, who the fuck do you think you're talking to with that attitude?"

Vivienne, however, pulled Leopold back, her icy gaze landing squarely on Soren. "You're not wrong. Show your worth, and don't waste my time."

Soren frowned slightly. "Who's wasting whose time is yet to be seen!"

A flash of annoyance crossed Percival's face. "Soren, empty threats aren't your style."

Soren, captain of the Vanguard Agency's special squad third division, was the most hot-headed of the captains, but his skills were second to none.

In terms of overall capability, he was stronger than Leopold and just as stubborn.

The only person he respected was Percival. As for Thomas and Leopold, Soren hardly paid them any heed.

Upon hearing Percival speak, Soren's attitude softened slightly.

"Fine, follow me. Let your skills do the talking." Soren gave Vivienne a warning glance.

That look piqued Vivienne's interest.

It seemed Soren's real challenge was with her.

Interesting.

Vivienne's lips curved into a slight smile, utterly unfazed by Soren.

Those who could not even beat Percival were not worthy opponents for her.

Anna tossed her backpack to the ground and faced Soren defiantly. "Let's not make this complicated.

You be my opponent. If I win, I stay for training. If I lose, I'll pack up and leave without fuss."

Surprised by Anna's challenge, Soren saw the fire in the eyes of the teenager before him.

Anna changed into more comfortable clothes, and a one-on-one battle with Soren unfolded on the muddy training field.

Vivienne watched from the sidelines, aware of Anna's abilities and Soren's competence.

The outcome was anyone's guess.

"Mr. Wolf, care to wager?" Vivienne raised an eyebrow. "I bet a hundred grand on Anna."

"Then I'll put my money on Soren," Percival replied, his interest piqued.

The trainees gathered around, cheering on their instructor.

Anna, fueled by the roaring crowd, only grew more determined.

The fight between the two was fierce, with mud flying as they grappled, soon turning them into mud-splattered warriors.

Soren's moves were sharp and precise, and Anna used her agility to dodge his assaults repeatedly.

In the end, the match was too close to call.

Soren had a grip on Anna's vital point while she held his artery in her grasp.

Locked in a stalemate, neither could advance.

Vivienne's lips formed a triumphant smile, turning to Percival, "Looks like we both lose."

Thomas blew the whistle, stepped forward, and separated them, announcing the result, "It's a draw."

Leopold jeered at Soren. "Man, are you embarrassed? Fighting to a draw with a little girl?"

Soren kicked a clod of mud, sending it flying straight at Leopold.

Vivienne subtly pulled Leopold back a couple of inches, and the mud landed right at the tip of his shoe.

With a flick of her toe, a pebble soared up, striking Soren's knee.

The move was smooth and went unnoticed even by Leopold at her side.

Soren felt a numbness in his leg from the pebble and looked at Vivienne in surprise.

She raised an eyebrow at him.

Did he really think he could bully her protege right before her?

Inside, Soren was shocked. Vivienne had the skill to attack him in the blink of an eye, and he was none the wiser!

In fact, had Vivienne not intended for him to notice, he would never have known that the pebble had come from her.

Soren cast a deep glance at Vivienne.

In Soren's eyes, Percival was a legend, the only man he truly admired.

And Vivienne? She was just a nobody. How special could she be?

In Soren's book, the person worthy of Percival did not exist.

Seeing Vivienne today only exacerbated his discontent. Updated at Drqmanovels.com

Was this not leading the captain astray?

Hence, Soren's dissatisfaction grew. It was bad enough if she could not assist their captain, but she was even holding him back.

However, now, Soren was beginning to see things a little differently.

At the very least, he had to admit that Vivienne's capabilities exceeded his own.

But whether she was a match for the captain remained to be seen.

Soren was taken aback, then his gaze hardened. "You passed. Go change into your training gear and get started!"

With that, Soren stormed off, his anger palpable.

Leopold was puzzled. "Hotshot? Anna, his name is Soren."

Anna flexed her wrist casually, "I know. But the guy's got an ego bigger than this training field."