

Million-Dollar 441

Chapter 441

She glanced at Soren's retreating figure, knowing full well her recent tie in combat was just a stroke of luck.

Soren was still nursing an old injury, not yet back in top form.

Percival approached with the detached professionalism of a captain, addressing Anna, "A month from now will be the final assessment. Pass that, and I'll arrange for you to start interning in the lab while carrying out missions."

Anna saluted smartly. "Yes, sir. I won't let you or Vivienne down."

Vivienne watched her with a hint of amusement. The girl was a quick study.

While Leopold drove Vivienne and Percival back to their estate, Anna was left at the Vanguard Agency's training camp to hone her skills.

On the way, Leopold queried, "Vivienne, do you think Anna's got what it takes? The Agency's training isn't for the faint of heart."

Despite Anna's draw with Soren, he was worried.

"If you made it through, she will too," Vivienne replied nonchalantly, leaning on Percival's shoulder.

Percival nodded in agreement, “Right, makes sense.”

Leopold glanced in the rear-view mirror, catching the couple’s affectionate display, and asked belatedly,

“Hang on. What do you mean 'if I made it through'? I’m way better than Anna, okay?”

Vivienne lifted her gaze lazily, “She’s nineteen. How old are you?”

Leopold fell silent.

Alright, he asked for it. He should just shut up!

With a snap, he pulled down the visor.

Out of sight, out of mind, right?

...

A month later.

The assessment at Vanguard Agency officially began. The YQ and TCL labs had merged, keeping the

YQ lab’s name.

Vivienne arrived at the lab first, taking in the familiar surroundings.

It was set up just like the one her mother, Karen, had established years ago.

Percival had spent the past month meticulously restoring it to its former glory.

Vivienne could almost see her mother working diligently as she approached the familiar workbench.

She walked the path her mother had once walked.

“Ma’am,” Holden emerged from within, followed by a group of lab researchers.

Now the head of YQ lab, Holden had been orienting his team to the lab’s environment and its various functions.

Vivienne nodded in acknowledgment, her eyes catching an unfinished experimental report on the desk.

Holden approached, saying, “We’ve been trying to replicate that 3D biological printer, but we’re hitting a

wall.”

During the lab’s month of operation, Holden and his team had been busy with experiments and theories.

Vivienne quickly spotted several errors on the report and said, “These numbers are correct, but you’ve got the direction mixed up. Give it another shot.”

The researchers’ eyes lit up. They had been stuck for a month, but Vivienne had seen the solution at a

glance.

Admiration was an understatement.

They were research fanatics, and seeing Vivienne's expertise, they eagerly surrounded her with reports from their own fields.

After a brief discussion, Vivienne asked, "Who's handling the potion department?"

The crowd parted, revealing a young man holding a copy of Hippocrates' Corpus. His hair was neatly trimmed, his nails clean, and he wore silver-rimmed glasses with a naive yet profound smile.

"Ma'am, I'm working on the potions," he said pleasantly.

Vivienne sized him up, feeling an odd sense of familiarity.

Thinking Vivienne doubted the young man's capabilities, Holden quickly added, "Ma'am, his name is Rex. He's a recent hire. Young, yes, but a medical prodigy and quite insightful about potions."

Intrigued, Vivienne said, "Show me your research."

Rex handed over his half-finished report. Each word was deliberate and meaningful.

She nodded, impressed by his talent.

"There are parts I'm unclear about. I'll report back to the director once I've figured them out," Rex said,

marking a question on the report.

Vivienne looked at it and scribbled a series of numbers. "Try this."

Rex pondered the numbers for a moment, his eyes brightening. "Yes, this could work!"

Vivienne set down the pen and said, "How long have you been working on potion research?"

"Since this morning," Rex replied casually, clutching the report as he headed to his workstation,

engrossed in his work.

Holden offered another explanation. "Ma'am, he's utterly devoted to medicine. We're all used to it by now."

Vivienne was not bothered. However, Rex's dedication reminded her of someone, though that person was not nearly as clean-cut.

As they spoke, Percival entered, "Anna's arrived."

Vivienne turned.

Anna looked tanned and tougher after a month, with fresh scars on her exposed arms.

She stepped forward, saluting. "Special squad third division operative Anna, reporting for duty, ma'am."

Third division?

Was that not Soren's team?

Vivienne looked at Percival, who explained, "Luck of the draw. She drew the short straw."

Vivienne patted Anna's shoulder. "Passing is all that matters."

Truth be told, she had never been worried about Anna. Since she was a young girl, Anna had been shadowing Daphne, picking up all the qualities expected of a Vanguard Agency's elite squad member.

In other words, even Leopold might not be as qualified as Anna.

But still, her goal was to make it into the laboratory, which came with its fair share of risks.

That meant she had to pass the rigorous assessments of the Vanguard Agency.

The elite squad at Vanguard had its dedicated medical research team, but even so, making it through their assessments was merely scratching the surface for the YQ Lab.

Yet this was proof enough that Anna was eligible for an internship at the lab. Updated at

Dramanovels.com

Anna could barely contain her excitement. This was the lab of her dreams, and once inside, she could fulfill her late mother's last wish.

Fortunately, she had passed all assessments and finally earned her spot.

Vivienne looked surprised and turned to Percival. "Was this your doing?"

He could have taken on the task himself.

But Dorian would not let him move into the Brooks family home, sharing a room with Vivienne.

This honorable yet daunting task ultimately fell upon Anna, the team's sole female member.

Percival thought, "I'm envious, but I'll keep it to myself."

Chapter 442

Vivienne's mind was clear.

Having Anna by her side was a blessing in disguise; they could fulfill their mothers' last wishes

together.

Vivienne took Anna on a tour of the lab, and Anna's eyes sparkled with growing excitement. She had

heard tales from her mother about these experiments since she was a child, and now, armed with her

current medical knowledge, she was eager to dive in.

Just then, Rex emerged with a new research report in hand. Spotting Vivienne, he made a beeline for

her, inadvertently edging Anna aside. "I think we need to pivot here; the methodology is off, don't you

think?"

Vivienne was taken aback by Rex's swift progress, having made so many advances in just half an hour.

"Right," Vivienne said, taking the report from Rex, and they began to hash out the future direction of

their research. They were remarkably in sync on several points.

However, Rex's focus leaned towards studying the toxicity of potions.

Their discussion was animated, and while Anna could follow along at first, she soon found herself lost

in the technicalities.

She stepped back, no longer wanting to interrupt, and waited for Vivienne.

Anna glanced over at Percival, who was waiting off to the side with a nonchalant look on his face, and

she was slightly surprised.

Percival did not seem jealous of the handsome man getting cozy with Vivienne. She remembered

distinctly how Percival had reacted to Aaron before—his face dark as coal when he closed the car

window.

Fiddling with Vivienne's phone, Percival caught Anna's gaze and looked up indifferently as if to say, "Of

course."

He was not the jealous type.

Vivienne was at work, handling serious business. Her work was far more critical than any fleeting jealousy. He was not a green-eyed monster.

Leopold snorted from the driver's seat, "As if you're not the jealous type. I'd eat my hat!"

Thomas chimed in, "Hard to disagree."

After wrapping up the discussion with Rex, the sky was darkening.

"That's enough for today," Vivienne said as she set down the report.

She turned to Anna, "Did you catch all that?"

Anna nodded, "I did. Anything I'm unclear about, I'll compile and bring to you."

Vivienne pocketed her pen, "Let's go."

Although Rex seemed reluctant to end the conversation, he knew better than to keep Vivienne from leaving and watched them exit.

A sly smile crept across Rex's face as Vivienne's silhouette receded. He grasped the report tightly, changed into casual clothes, and left the lab.

Vivienne's irritation was apparent in the car as she looked at her phone. Her wallpaper, lock screen, Facebook cover, chat interface—everything had been switched to various images of Mr. Wolf in combat gear, training, and during mock battles, all radiating rugged charm.

She had complimented Thomas once, and Mr. Wolf had held onto it for a month.

No wonder he had been so eager to get his hands on her phone.

Seeing her stare at the phone, Percival's lips curled as he said with a magnetic voice, "Vivienne, I'm the most handsome."

Vivienne was speechless.

Who said he was not the jealous type again?

Leopold, driving, suddenly announced, "Vivienne, we've got a tail."

Vivienne put away her phone and leaned on Percival's shoulder, her eyes closed in mischief, "Reel them in."

"Roger that!" Leopold maneuvered closer to their tail, but in a blink, the pursuer disappeared.

"Damn, they're pros," Leopold cursed.

Anna sighed. "Ms. Vivienne, I told you Huskies can't drive."

"Indeed," Percival gave Leopold a scornful look. It was embarrassing to lose a tail so easily.

Vivienne glanced back and said coolly. "They're pros, good at staying hidden."

"See, I still have Vivienne's support!" Leopold argued, excited.

Vivienne was the best!

"But your skills do need work. It's embarrassing," Vivienne added, glancing at Leopold.

Leopold was instantly deflated.

"Vivienne, the tail's gone. Where to?" Leopold's energy drained.

Vivienne checked the time; they had enough left, "Let's go see Scott."

They had planned to visit Scott today anyway but had not anticipated the delay.

Scott was the sole occupant of Vanguard Agency's secret prison, a form of privileged isolation.

Leopold and Anna stayed outside while Vivienne and Percival entered. Scott was sitting in a chair, lost

in thought, hooked up to a heart rate monitor, seemingly in another world.

Today marked his first interrogation. Besides the guards who delivered meals to him, he never met

anyone else.

Hearing footsteps, he looked up, and a ripple of emotion crossed his deep-set eyes.

For a moment, he mistook Vivienne for Karen.

If Karen had borne him a daughter, he imagined she would look just like this, sharing all of Karen's best traits.

Under Scott's gaze, Vivienne took a seat and met his stare.

Both were silent for a while until Scott broke the ice.

"Never thought you'd be the one to interrogate me," Scott's dry lips cracked into a smile, revealing a hint of blood.

It was hard to deny that Scott did not have the face of a villain.

On the contrary, he had the air of a gentleman born into high society, with a demeanor as smooth and refined as jade.

His eyes always carried a soft gentleness, like a ray of sunshine on a cold winter's day.

Percival gently ruffled Vivienne's hair. "Don't waste your time on fools."

Their exchange momentarily took aback Scott. "What do you mean?"

Vivienne raised an eyebrow, "What do you think?"

After a few seconds of silence, realization dawned on Scott, and he exclaimed, "You've found Mr. B!"

Vivienne looked at him with a smile that was not quite a smile and remained silent.

Chapter 443

Scott's palm tightened as he realized Mr. B had been compromised. If that was the case, what was

Vivienne planning to do next?

He gazed steadily at Vivienne, his expression growing increasingly wary.

Vivienne, for her part, had no interest in exchanging pointless banter with Scott. She cut to the chase

and said, "Where is the research facility for the new bomb?"

For too long, Percival and she had been on the trail of this new weapon.

But whether it was Percival, the Nine Mystics Society, or the Frostfire Intelligence Agency, the intel had been scant at best.

They had scoured every avenue. Even the car accident from before had not escaped their scrutiny.

And now, they had a lead. But it was still uncertain.

Scott remained tight-lipped.

The research facility for the new bomb was a critical project for the organization. It was an essential

weapon to match up to the power of the Vanguard Agency. Thus, the bomb could not be compromised.

Especially now, as the organization was refining the bomb's capabilities.

Before Scott had been captured, there had already been significant advancements.

Vivienne was in no rush. She said leisurely, "The Brooks family had a gala two days ago, planning to auction off a parcel of land. There's an abandoned factory on it that you once decided to buy, but it's been idle ever since. Now Ronald wants to sell it off, trade it for a plot in Eastlake Bay, and build a spa resort. Do you think it will sell?"

Scott bolted upright, the heart rate monitor beeping rapidly with his agitation.

Yet he clenched his teeth, refusing to utter a single word.

But his reaction was enough.

Vivienne curved her lips. "Thanks, Mr. Brooks."

With that, she and Percival rose to leave.

The Nine Mystics Society had uncovered three potential sites for the new bomb research, all linked to the Brooks family.

This was hardly surprising. A bomb research site needed to be remote and quiet, and with Scott in

power, he would have naturally leveraged the Brooks family's influence to facilitate GTO's needs.

But a clever fox would always have more than one hideout. Scott had purchased three similar plots of land in one go yet chose to develop none.

Investigating any of these sites would require significant resources, and if all three were explored simultaneously, it would inevitably create vulnerabilities.

If they decided to storm one based on a hunch and were wrong, they risked alarming their quarry, losing the precious lead they had worked so hard to find.

That was why Vivienne had come to Scott today, dropping that particular hint about the land sale.

The truth was the Brooks family had no intention of selling.

Upon leaving the interrogation room, Percival said to Leopold, "Head back to headquarters. We're requesting a raid on Eastlake Bay!"

Leopold was taken aback, "Eastlake Bay? But that's not the Brooks family's property. Are we raiding the Brooks family?"

Anna, too, was surprised, but after a moment of contemplation, she grasped the implication.

The Brooks family's three plots of land were indeed problematic, but the biggest issue was that all three surrounded Eastlake Bay.

Eastlake Bay had a vast territory with plenty of residential areas and numerous transportation lines.

It had it all, be it passenger, freight traffic, or even the port.

If any of the Brooks family's plots came under siege, Eastlake Bay would receive immediate news and could flee via the port or other transportation routes.

By the time they realized what had happened, the new bomb would be long gone.

Given Scott's cunning, Eastlake Bay was the optimal base location.

The three plots were just decoys.

Vivienne had pinpointed Eastlake Bay on the map at first glance, and her visit today was to confirm her suspicions with Scott.

Vivienne would not be joining Percival at headquarters.

She would mobilize the Order of Nine Mystics Society first. If the headquarters could not authorize the mission, then the Nine Mystics Society would take matters into their own hands.

It would not be so complicated if not for Percival's current restrictions.

The group split up. Vivienne issued the order, deploying all available members in Rivenwood to lie in wait near Eastlake Bay.

Percival raced to headquarters at top speed.

Thomas and Soren had their teams ready, just waiting for Percival to give the command so they could move out.

Ten minutes later, Percival emerged from his superior's office, his hands empty and his expression dark.

Leopold, already changed into his gear, joined Thomas and Soren in confronting him, "What's the call?

Do we move out now?"

Percival clenched his fist, glancing up at the three, "Second and third squads stand down. First squad, strip your combat gear. You're with me."

"What?" Soren exclaimed, "Captain, that's a bomb research facility, and you're heading there with just the first squad, unarmed? Are you waiting to get blown up?"

Leopold also lost some of his composure. "Eastlake Bay's huge; the first squad's just a few people. Are

you out of your mind?"

Thomas was more composed, speaking gravely, "Captain, what exactly are the higher-ups thinking?"

Percival shed his jacket and tossed it to Thomas. He began donning a stealth operations suit designed for reconnaissance and concealment, "It's a residential area. To avoid panic, we must first assess the situation before we can raid."

"Darn it!" Soren kicked a trash can in frustration. "With Scott in cuffs, they were already on high alert.

What if something went wrong, and they found you guys?"

Soren was fuming, and both Leopold and Thomas could not understand why the higher-ups were so cautious.

But, considering the safety of the locals, their caution was somewhat justified.

It was hard to argue with that.

Irritated, Leopold tucked his gun into his waistband and angrily ripped off his bulletproof vest. "This is freaking suffocating."

No wonder they were all worked up. The recent operations made the entire special squad feel like they were punching a pillow.

No satisfaction whatsoever.

Percival's reaction was not as intense. He took out his phone and texted Vivienne.

[Vivienne, it's go time.]

Vivienne was not surprised by the message.

Ever since Calista was released without charges, Vivienne had lost some faith in the leadership at the Vanguard Agency.

She just lacked solid evidence. Content of DramaNovels.com

When it came to raiding a new bomb-making facility, the list of considerations was even longer.

But Vivienne was different. She could ensure that the surrounding residential area was absolutely safe before launching an assault on the lab.

No need to promise anyone else. Just assuring herself was enough.

With the backup of the Vanguard Agency, she could play a supporting role on the periphery. Without them, she was more than capable on her own.

Vivienne texted Draven: [Raid Eastlake Bay!]

Half an hour later, Draven called.

"Boss, we hit a dead end," he said.

Vivienne paused, her expression turning grim. "What happened?"

Chapter 444

Vivienne slammed the phone down with a chilling finality that seemed to echo the icy resolve in her eyes.

Three minutes later, the realization hit both Vivienne and Percival simultaneously.

The bomb research facility was nestled right beneath Eastlake Bay Plaza, spreading its clandestine roots beneath half the square.

The scene suggested a hasty escape; the fleeing suspects only had snatched the crucial documents.

The operatives from the Nine Mystics Society had already evacuated, and Leopold, leading the first squad, had scoured the base thoroughly.

"Vivienne, Percival, check this out." Leopold approached, cradling a box in his arms.

Percival flipped the box open to reveal a scale model of a state-of-the-art bomb—obviously left behind in the chaos.

This only confirmed the suspicion that the perpetrators had received an urgent tip-off.

Otherwise, they never would have left something so vital behind.

Vivienne extracted the model, a one-to-one replica. While not as revealing as written documents, to the trained eye, it could divulge the bomb's design.

The bomb's most unnerving feature was its ability to evade detection—compact, portable, and easy to conceal.

Understanding how it slipped past sensors would be key to preemptive defense.

Vivienne tucked the model away. "I'm taking this."

Percival nodded. He had no intention of reporting a mere model to the higher-ups. He still had that much leverage.

Instead, Percival simply called Thomas, instructing him to report the escapees' flight, foregoing a return to headquarters.

On the way back, Leopold was fuming.

"Damn it, if we had set up a blockade sooner, I bet we could've stopped them. What are the higher-ups thinking? If they're worried about civilian safety, just make up an excuse to evacuate. A fire drill,

earthquake drill—anything would've worked. This is infuriating!"

Anna, unable to stomach his ranting any longer, snapped. "Husky, can you shut it?"

The frustration of a botched operation was bad enough without his incessant grumbling.

"I can't shut it," Leopold retorted. "How many times now? If nothing works, maybe we should just surrender, throw in the towel."

His outrage was not unwarranted—they could have at least set up a perimeter, avoiding the empty-handed outcome.

"Percival, why don't you climb the ranks already?" Leopold blurted out, his anger getting the better of him, a clear sign of his exasperation.

Anna massaged her temples. Now, even divine intervention could not save him.

Percival, seated in the back, responded darkly, "Sure, any other commands?"

Breaking into a cold sweat, Leopold realized what he had just implied.

"Help me, Vivienne!" He yelled inwardly.

And as if she had heard his desperate plea, Vivienne tugged at Percival's arm, the other hand on the bomb model, and said calmly, "Mr. Wolf, perhaps it's time for you to climb higher."

Unexpected complications within the Vanguard Agency had thwarted their recent operations.

The true cause of her mother's death remained a mystery.

Who had called her mother, prompting her to choose suicide?

Vivienne had never considered the possibility of a mole within the Vanguard Agency, a team her mother had trusted implicitly.

But now...

If she uncovered that a Vanguard Agency betrayal had led to her mother's failed mission, she would ensure the traitor learned that neither prison nor the grave would be their ultimate sanctuary.

Percival's brows arched subtly, understanding her intent. "Yes, I agree. You've worked hard today, Leopold."

Leopold felt a chill. He turned, his face a portrait of dread. "I'm sorry, Percival!"

Vivienne toyed with the bomb model, a sly smile playing on her lips, while Percival's normally stoic eyes twinkled with amusement.

Leopold, witnessing their expressions, panicked.

He would rather be slapped by Vivienne or kicked by Percival than subjected to their chilling smiles.

It was as if the Grim Reaper was grinning at a doomed soul.

Unable to bear it, Leopold clasped his hands, pleading with the pair, "I'm sorry, Vivienne, Percival. I'll do whatever you ask—climb mountains, swim oceans, even streak across Mount Everest!"

Percival's fingertips tapped rhythmically on the leather seat. "There's no need for such dramatics. Just help me contact someone."

Vivienne nodded, cradling the bomb model, her smile as bright as ever. "I wouldn't dream of sending him to such extremes."

Leopold gulped, "You two aren't thinking of her, are you?"

Only one person could deduce a bomb's workings from a model, someone trustworthy and an expert in weaponry.

Percival and Vivienne's silence was an answer in itself, their smiles unnerving.

Leopold's face went pale as he stammered, "No way, I can't possibly call Griffin. It's out of the question!"

Griffin - the tenacious hound he had barely shaken off.

A nightmare.

A demon.

Vivienne wagged her finger. "Nope, Gary needs a gigolo at his place, and Leopold is perfect for the job."

Leopold was petrified.

These two were absolutely nuts.

But what could he do?

Under the tyrannical influence of Percival and Vivienne, how could he not cave?

The phone rang for almost thirty seconds before the voice at the other end lazily answered, "Who's this?" Updated at Dramanovels.com

Leopold paused, baffled. Griffin was someone who knew his number by heart; heck, he was her emergency contact.

Even if she had not saved his number, she should not be asking, 'Who's this'!

"It's Leopold, you're Griffin, right?" Leopold asked, beginning to question his entire existence.

Leopold glanced at Vivienne and added, "Well, it's Vivienne who needs you. Not sure if you're free."

Griffin paused, her voice lifting with intrigue. "You sure it's Vivienne, not you?"

Leopold flushed with embarrassment, "Well, actually..."

Before he could finish, Griffin cut in, "I'm at the Runxing Community. Come find me."

Then she hung up.

Chapter 445

Leopold could not believe it as the call abruptly ended.

Griffin hung up on him!

This was not normal!

Even Vivienne was taken aback. She remembered quite vividly what Griffin was like the last time they met.

But this time, it was a complete turnaround.

Taking a deep breath, Leopold joined Vivienne and Percival on their way to the Runxing Community.

In the residential area.

Griffin was waiting at the front door. As soon as she saw Vivienne, she greeted her warmly, "Vivienne, long time no see."

"It has been a while," Vivienne greeted back.

"Come on in," Griffin said as she opened the door. "It's just me at home."

Vivienne and Percival walked in side by side, followed closely by Anna.

Just as Leopold was about to follow them inside, Griffin suddenly shut the door and said sternly, "Didn't

you hear me? It's just me at home. You think you can just barge into a lady's private space?"

Leopold was almost speechless. He incredulously pointed at Percival. "What about him?"

"He's Vivienne's fiancé, practically family. Of course, he can come in," Griffin said, raising an eyebrow

at Leopold. "And you are?"

With a thud, the door closed, leaving Leopold alone in the chilling wind.

Griffin's place was not like the typical girl's house. It had an old-fashioned charm, with mahogany

furniture and a table in the center of the living room.

The only out-of-place item was a Husky figurine on the tea table.

Vivienne sat down without concern for why Leopold could not come in and got straight to the point,

"Griffin, we're here because we need your help with something."

As Griffin skillfully poured tea for everyone, she asked, "What's up?"

Percival pulled out a model of a cutting-edge bomb, explaining, "We need to figure out the workings and structure of this bomb and develop a detector for it. Interested?"

Griffin's eyes lit up.

As a top-tier weapons enthusiast and expert, she was naturally intrigued.

"Is this that elusive new bomb making the rounds on the black market?" Griffin asked.

Vivienne nodded. "Yes."

She glanced at Griffin and added, "You're familiar with it?"

Griffin examined the bomb model closely, turning it over in her hands. "Of course I am. This thing, it stole one of my ideas."

"Your idea?" Vivienne was surprised.

"Yeah," Griffin confirmed, pulling out an unfinished paper. "This was my concept three years ago. But then my computer got hacked, and I noticed this paper had been copied. I knew someone must have plagiarized my idea."

Vivienne quickly scanned the paper; indeed, the content matched certain features of the new bomb.

"How did you come across this?" Vivienne asked coolly.

Griffin chuckled. "I have my ways. But let's get down to business, Vivienne. I agree to work with you on this, but I have one condition, a non-negotiable. Agree to it, and I'll research this for you pro bono."

Interest sparked in Vivienne's eyes. "Is it about Leopold?"

Griffin did not deny it. "That's right, him."

Vivienne smiled slyly. "I agree."

Griffin was taken aback. "I haven't even said..."

Before she could finish, Vivienne cut her off, "It doesn't matter!"

If Leopold had heard this from outside, he would have said, "Vivienne, did you just sell me out like that?"

Griffin laughed and stated her condition. Then they quickly moved on to discuss their collaboration.

After about ten minutes at Griffin's house, the partnership was settled, and they left the new bomb prototype with her.

Leopold sat in the car the whole time, his mind a whirl of confusion and frustration.

He could not fathom Griffin's attitude towards him today. And what was with her sudden vendetta against him?

Had he not said that he would marry her in a heartbeat if his grandfather agreed?

But if the old man disagreed, why take it out on him?

Lost in thought, he saw Vivienne, Percival, and Anna enter the car.

Leopold immediately turned to Vivienne. "Did she agree?"

Vivienne glanced at him and simply replied, "Yeah."

Leopold, knowing Griffin, suspected it was not that simple, "Did she make some outrageous demand?

Did she give you guys a hard time?" Leopold pressed his lips, bracing himself, "Does she want me to...make an offer of marriage? Vivienne, you didn't agree, did you?"

Before Vivienne could speak, Leopold rushed on. "I really didn't do anything to her. I kissed her once

when I was young and foolish, and it was just on the cheek. I didn't even know what getting married

meant. Besides, the old man would never agree. Vivienne, I do want to figure out that bomb, but I can't agree to marry her!"

Leopold rattled off his thoughts.

Vivienne and Percival looked at him as if he was an oddity.

Anna's eyes were full of undisguised disdain.

Scratching his head in confusion, Leopold turned to Anna. "Anna, what on earth happened?"

Anna gave Leopold a long, measured look before slowly saying, "Griffin did make a condition, and indeed, it involves you."

"I knew it. She wants to marry me, right? Impossible!" Leopold stated firmly.

Anna massaged her temples. "Griffin's condition is that you must be utterly out of sight during the research. You can't even deliver documents. To put it bluntly, you need to disappear from our lives for a while."

Leopold nearly bit off his tongue in shock. "What did you just say?!"

Vanish from sight?

This was utterly unreasonable!

Entirely and utterly preposterous!

And so unlike Griffin at all!

Vivienne and Percival could not have looked more indifferent as they casually glanced over.

Anna let out a sigh. "Focus on the road, Mr. Narcissistic Husky."

That just plunged Leopold further into his existential crisis.

And then, he went home alone to his quiet contemplation.

He still could not wrap his head around it in the dead of night.

Had Griffin lost her marbles?

Unable to sleep, Leopold grabbed his phone and opened the group chat where he and other nine

disciples usually hung out. Content of Drąmanovels.com

Leopold: [Guys, Griffin wants to cut ties with me.]

Jerry: [??]

Eric: [Weren't you always annoyed by her chasing after you?]

Vivienne: [Pathetic.]

All the nine disciples: [Vivienne, you're online?]

Vivienne: [Go to sleep, you're noisy.]

With that, the nine swiftly logged off.

Leopold was left alone, staring at the silent group chat.

Well, with Vivienne's decree, it looked like he had no one else to talk to.

Chapter 446

Vivienne screenshotted the group chat and sent it to Griffin.

Husky Smasher: [I knew Charlotte's idea was right, oh Vivienne, I love you.]

Husky Smasher was Griffin's nickname.

Vivienne pinched the bridge of her nose, somewhat speechless.

This Griffin, coming up with such an idea. Vivienne could not tell if Griffin was torturing herself or

Leopold.

During the day, Griffin had pulled her aside into a room and, with utmost seriousness, stated that

marrying Leopold was a given after a kiss, but she did not want to pursue it in this manner and asked

for her help.

Then she went on with a whole spiel.

About how, yes, she would marry, but it depended on whether Leopold even liked her.

If not, she would not insist. She would only marry Leopold if there were mutual affection.

So, she had to test the waters!

Hearing Griffin's lengthy explanation, Vivienne just asked whether she wanted to marry Leopold simply because of a kiss or if she genuinely liked him.

Full of righteous fervor, Griffin said, "Of course, it's because I like him! Why else would I let him kiss me? I am the proud heiress of the ancient warrior lineage, the Martinez family. I have my pride, and not just anyone can wed me!"

Vivienne was speechless.

...

At the Perez Mansion in Rivenwood.

Jasper looked at a photograph of his daughter from her childhood, his eyes glistening with tears.

After so many years, he still wondered how his Sasha was doing.

Yuri knocked and entered, "Dad, why haven't you gone to bed yet?"

"Can't sleep." Jasper put away the photograph and stood up, walking to the yard with Yuri. "Something on your mind?"

"Yep, it's about that little girl from the Martinez family," Yuri said, helping Jasper into the rocking chair in

the yard. "The girl is teaming up with Vivienne to study the new type of explosive we've been investigating."

Surprise flickered in Jasper's eyes, followed by a heavy chuckle. "Those two working together, now that's something. Alright, let them handle it. Young people have their own ways."

After a pause, Jasper's expression darkened. "What about CK? Any progress on that front?"

Yuri shook his head. "All leads pointed to Fiona from the second branch of the Ellington family, but after her arrest, the trail went cold."

Jasper's brow furrowed. "If the trail's gone cold, find a new one. If we can't find that person, we'll never know Sasha's whereabouts."

For years, the Perez family had been searching for their lost daughter, Sasha Perez.

With Yasmine and Natalia's kidnapping, they finally stumbled upon a clue.

The child thief was no common trafficker but an organization known as CK.

Though CK was a newly risen underground syndicate, its predecessor was the infamous and nefarious RST.

RST's dealings in human trafficking, unethical experiments, and organ sales were beyond the pale.

Jasper himself led the charge to dismantle RST's headquarters, yet their leader, code named F-Poison, managed to escape.

It was during that operation that Jasper was seriously injured and hospitalized. When he awoke, his beloved youngest daughter had vanished.

He was certain that F-Poison had taken her in revenge.

Yet, for so many years, there had been no trace.

Had it not been for CK targeting Natalia and Yasmine, the Perez family might never have found a lead on CK or uncovered its connection to RST.

Yuri said firmly, "I understand. CK is more cunning than RST ever was and is an expert at legalizing its deeds. It won't be easy to deal with."

Jasper looked down, contemplative. "You'll take care of this. By the way, if Vivienne wants to work on that new explosive, is there a place for her?"

Explosives research was no trivial matter. One false move and disaster could strike.

Thus, a legal and suitable location was essential.

The legality was not an issue; after all, all of Griffin's patents were state-owned, and this new invention would be no exception.

But finding the right place was the challenge.

Yuri, of course, grasped his father's meaning. "Don't worry, Dad. Zelda has everything arranged. Her nephew will arrive in Rivenwood tomorrow and will reach out to Vivienne."

Jasper nodded in satisfaction. "Good."

After a moment, something else came to mind, "Remember, Vivienne mentioned that Scott from the Brooks family isn't her biological father, right?"

Yuri paused, puzzled by the sudden mention of Scott. "Yes, she has no blood ties to the Brooks family.

Her mother seems to have had some reason to be with them."

They had previously investigated Vivienne's mother, Karen, and found little information. But after

Scott's arrest, some things became easier to investigate.

Although Karen's identity remained unclear, the details of her involvement with Scott were now known.

Jasper looked up at the dark night sky, pointing to a star right in the middle, "See that Parent-Child

Star? It's drawing closer to us."

Yuri looked up, his expression changing. "Could it be that Sasha has appeared in Rivenwood?"

"No!" Jasper shook his head. "It doesn't represent Sasha."

He had never believed that Sasha was dead, but he always felt she was slipping further away.

And that star did not seem to symbolize the connection between a biological parent and child.

Yuri was somewhat lost. "Then what does it mean?"

They suspected that Vivienne was Sasha's daughter, so naturally, anyone related to Vivienne was under scrutiny.

Those ten paternity tests were discovered only recently.

Yuri jolted. "Yeah, why do the tests show a valid relationship if there's no blood connection?" Updated at Dramanovels.com

Even he was perplexed at this point.

Yuri was shocked. "But the last paternity test was conducted in our hospital. How capable must someone be to change DNA records in our facility?"

Yuri fell silent.

After a while, he looked up at Jasper, saying, "Dad, are you suggesting we need another paternity test?"

Before Jasper could respond, Yuri added, "Why do you believe Vivienne is Sasha's daughter?"

Jasper sighed softly and pulled a piece of paper from his pocket, "Take a look at this."

Yuri took the paper, and his brow furrowed. "Who gave you this?"

Chapter 447

The note on it was terse, just two words scrawled in a hasty script: [Appraisal, wrong!]

It was a clear message that the appraisal they had was incorrect.

They knew that many were searching for Sasha, and word of this was common knowledge amongst

the ancient warrior lineages. However, no one knew that they believed Vivienne to be Sasha's child and

had even gone as far as to do a paternity test with her.

The person who slipped the paper to Jasper obviously knew their family affairs like the back of his hand.

This was not good news.

"I found it on my pillow when I woke up two days ago," Jasper said, lifting his eyes to meet his son's, a

wry chuckle escaping his lips. "Funny, isn't it? Someone got into my room right under your noses, and nobody noticed!"

Yuri broke out in a cold sweat. "Dad! Why didn't you mention something this serious earlier?"

"That person harbors no ill will."

Jasper knew he might not have been alive to tell the tale if there had been any malice.

"But you should have told us so we could beef up security," Yuri protested, visibly shaken.

Jasper was unharmed, but if something had happened, his siblings would have torn him apart.

"I kept it to myself because I've been pondering over the accuracy of this information," Jasper said, his face growing stern. "That's why I've decided to run another paternity test. And this stays between us.

We'll get Willa to do it."

"But Willa, she..."

Before Yuri could finish, Jasper cut him off with a commanding tone, "Once she conducts the test, I'll let her walk away from the Perez family."

Yuri opened his mouth to speak, but Jasper's icy stare silenced him. He sighed, "Understood."

Jasper glanced at him and added, "Go to Vivienne. Get blood, hair, saliva—anything that can be

tested."

Yuri twitched at the corner of his mouth. "Isn't that a bit intrusive?"

"We've already intruded. Vivienne is smart; she's guessed we did the test," Jasper stated. "If we're

doing it again, let's do it right. It's better to be upfront than to sneak around."

...

The next day.

Vivienne had barely gotten out of bed when she heard a commotion in her living room. It sounded like

someone had come to visit.

Dorian had only recently moved to Rivenwood and was not likely to have guests.

And business partners surely would not show up so early in the morning.

Besides, the voices sounded familiar.

She changed and stepped out of her room.

"Vivienne! I've missed you so much!"

Before she could fully step out, Dawson burst towards her with open arms.

She stepped back and slammed the door shut.

With a bang, Dawson's nose bled profusely.

Cordelia rushed to hand him a tissue. "Dawson, here, wipe it off. Are you okay?"

Dawson waved the blood off and said, "I'm fine, I'm fine. Please, take a seat, I'm okay."

Only then did Vivienne emerge from her room and casually took a piece of fruit from the bowl, asking,

"Finished copying the Ten Commandments?"

Leopold had returned early because Mr. Wolf had a mission. The others had finished long ago. Only

Dawson had taken so long, not finishing and even running back to Havenwood.

Vivienne had not had time to deal with him lately, and now he had the nerve to show up on her

doorstep.

Dabbing at his bloody nose, Dawson sat across Vivienne and grinned sheepishly, "Done. I brought it

just for your inspection."

He flashed a cheeky smile.

Vivienne could not be bothered and glanced over the pages.

The handwriting was atrocious.

Disgusted, she put down the copy of the Ten Commandments and eyed Dawson. "What brings you to Rivenwood?"

Seeing Vivienne was not angry, Dawson breathed a sigh of relief and explained, "I'm here to discuss a deal with the Brooks family. Got my eye on a piece of their land."

Vivienne raised an eyebrow. "The Eastlake Bay?"

"That's the one. You interested too?" Dawson asked.

"Mm-hmm."

Dawson beamed. "Consider it yours, Vivienne. Whatever you want, even the stars and the moon, I'll pull them down for you!"

Watching his infuriating grin, Vivienne simply closed her eyes, refusing to engage further.

Dorian was unsure what the discussion was about, but he knew better than to pry into Vivienne's affairs.

"Dawson, let's have lunch together. I owe you for all the help you've given us. Without it, I wouldn't have settled in so easily," Dorian said, grateful regardless of Dawson's reasons.

Dawson would not dream of declining an invitation from Dorian!

But, catching Vivienne's sidelong glance, his eager "Sure thing!" was promptly retracted. "I can't, I've got another engagement. Rain check?"

Dorian didn't press further.

As the CEO of Alliance Enterprises, Dawson's visit to Rivenwood meant business, and Dorian would not want to delay him.

"Alright, let me know when you're free. I'll wait for your call."

Dawson grinned from ear to ear. "You got it."

Dorian was the best!

After a short stay with her family, Vivienne followed Dawson out with Anna in tow.

"I'm researching explosives," Vivienne said nonchalantly.

Compared to Eastlake Bay, the suburban site was more secluded and further from residential areas, safer for her purposes.

She had her eye on that land for a while, but since it belonged to the Brooks family, it was difficult for her to approach them directly.

She had considered sending Leopold, but now, with Dawson here, it was perfect timing.

"Alright, I'm off to have a chat with the Brooks. Hang tight, Vivienne. Good news is on the way!"

To be honest, even if Vivienne wanted to delve into cannons instead of bombs, he would gladly hand

over the land resources with both arms! Content of Dramanovels.com

Dawson arrived at the agreed-upon meeting place with Ronald and prepared to leave the car.

Vivienne had not intended to make an appearance, but there Ronald was, waiting outside. Their eyes

met, and in the end, she stepped out of the car. "Long time no see."

Ronald managed an awkward smile. "Indeed, it's been a while."

He was still somewhat unsure of how to face Vivienne.

Not to mention, he was in the dark about the nature of Vivienne's relationship with Dawson.

That was why he had chosen to negotiate the land purchase with Ronald.

Ronald offered a smile. "Of course, it's no problem at all, as long as Vivienne doesn't mind."

"I don't mind at all. Let's head in," Vivienne said generously, smiling and walking in alongside Anna.

Chapter 448

Ronald felt a twinge of embarrassment as he saw Vivienne's forthright manner. The troubles of the

Brooks clan were not her fault after all; she had merely been the one to lift the veil on those unsightly scars.

They had no right to blame her. In fact, they should be thanking her. Without Vivienne's intervention, who knew what would become of the Brooks family in the future?

Yet, it was hard to digest such a dramatic shift. The Brooks clan had been a thriving and harmonious household, and to see it change so abruptly was unsettling, like a sudden shift in the weather.

Take Ashley, for instance—she still grumbled about Vivienne's lack of tact.

Since Scott had been taken away, Baron had checked himself back into the nursing home, occasionally bickering with Richard. He spent his days leisurely sipping tea and admiring the view—content, it seemed.

Timothy, lacking a knack for business, had delegated a significant portion of the company operations to Ronald. Now, he was practically a co-patriarch of the Brooks family.

As a potential future leader capable of shouldering the Brooks family's legacy, Ronald could not afford to be as petulant as Ashley.

Now that Vivienne had cleared the air, he let bygones be bygones.

"Dawson, after you," Ronald gestured with a hand, inviting Dawson to enter first.

At the dinner table, Vivienne and Anna focused on their meal, staying silent. On the other hand,

Dawson was engrossed in a subtle back-and-forth negotiation with Ronald over drinks, which

concluded with a \$600 million deal for that coveted piece of land.

A few rounds of drinks later, and with Ronald feeling the buzz, he inquired, "Dawson, what's your plan

for that plot of land? If you're thinking of building a mall or a residential area, how's the sales channel?

I'm quite interested myself."

Ronald was indeed shrewd. Selling his land for others to develop, then reinvesting in it, was a win-win.

He not only offloaded a piece of land he could not develop himself but also stood to make a profit from

the deal.

Dawson glanced at Vivienne. "Oh, that's a gift for Vivienne."

Ronald was taken aback, his eyes flicking to Vivienne in surprise. Spending \$600 million on land only

to give it away rather than develop it? That was not how one should spend money, even if one had it to

burn.

Ronald chuckled. "Vivienne, got any plans for it? Need a hand?"

Vivienne paused before replying, "I'm considering building a film studio."

Dawson nearly choked on his drink. A film studio?

Ronald nodded, opting out of this venture. Speaking of film studios, Vivienne recalled Kala.

"How's Kala doing? Has the production for 'Betrothed Understudy' started yet?"

During the last TV show recording, Percival had promised Kala a significant role. But with so much happening since, Vivienne had not had the chance to follow up.

"It has, but there have been some hiccups with the agency," Ronald said, becoming chattier with the alcohol kicking in.

Plus, there was a touch of guilt and concern for Kala. Her agency would not mistreat her if he were more capable."

"What's the issue?" Vivienne inquired.

After the TV show aired, Kala's career had seen a resurgence. Even with Scott's arrest, it should not have affected her much. What could have gone wrong?

Ronald took a sip. "Her contract with the agency was nearing its end, and she renewed it. Initially, they

were prioritizing her, but then she got undercut."

"Undercut?" Vivienne's brow furrowed.

"Yeah, the agency signed a new actress with good connections up high. Plus, with all the Brooks family drama, they feared a bad influence, so they plan to sideline Kala. She's fighting it, but the penalty fee is steep..."

Ronald stopped short, realizing he might be sounding resentful towards Vivienne.

He quickly added, "I'm sorry, Vivienne, I didn't mean that. It's the agency's fault for using the Brooks family issues as an excuse. Kala and I don't blame you."

Vivienne brushed it off. "No need to explain. I understand."

After dinner, on the ride home, Vivienne called Stephen.

The phone connected quickly, "Boss, you remembered me! What can I do for you?"

The background noise suggested Stephen was amidst a fan event.

"You at the set?" Vivienne asked.

"Yeah," Stephen found a quieter spot. "I've been meaning to tell you, I'm on the set of 'Betrothed

Understudy.' I'm fine, but Kala's struggling. Her scenes are getting cut drastically, and the second female lead's role is overshadowing hers."

Vivienne's frown deepened. "Your word doesn't count for anything?"

Stephen explained, "I can only ensure that my close-up scenes remain untouched by the second lead, but we follow the director for everything else. I'm a singer, not an actor by trade. And yeah, the second lead, Lucia—you know her. She's the new star at Kala's agency."

Vivienne paused, "Lucia?"

Who was that?

Did she know her?

Stephen's voice betrayed a hint of exasperation, "Boss, when did your memory get so bad? Lucia's the one you and Kala met during the last show."

"Oh, right." Vivienne's expression sharpened.

It was someone she barely remembered. However, how was Lucia, with all her scandals still facing the public?

Vivienne mused briefly. "Take care of her on set. Don't let her get bullied."

"Will do, boss. And boss, can I get a raise for..."

Click.

Vivienne hung up the call.

Salary raise? In your dreams!

Stephen yelled inwardly, "Boss, you're so heartless. My life is such a drag!"

As soon as she hung up the phone with Stephen, Vivienne texted Matthew. [Buy out the agency representing Kala.]

Matthew replied promptly, [Understood.] New chapter available on Dramanovels.com

On the set.

Kala was poring over the script. Her lines slashed and shortened to the point where she could barely remember them.

And with Lucia's charm, which had the director wrapped around her finger, his agreement was a foregone conclusion.

"Sure, sure, everything you want. I'll revise the script right away."

Lucia shot Kala a smug look.

Chapter 449

Kala clutched her palms tightly, her knuckles whitening. If the director added any more scenes for

Lucia, her role as the leading lady would be nothing but a title.

She could no longer swallow her pride and stepped forward to confront the situation. "Look, if you're

going to keep adding scenes, why not just give her my role as the lead?"

The director was in a tight spot. The investors had handpicked Kala, and he could not afford to

disappoint her, too.

However, since the investors had not interfered after their initial involvement, he had not taken their

choice too seriously.

"Kala, it's just a small addition to enrich the story. Don't be unreasonable and make a fuss over

nothing," he retorted.

Kala's face turned a shade of steel, "A small addition? I was supposed to shoot all day according to the

schedule, but I haven't even started. It's been all Lucia. Am I the one being unreasonable?"

The director's face darkened. "Kala, who's the director here, you or me? You should be grateful you're

the lead. What more do you want?"

"You..." In the past, Kala would have walked away without a second thought.

But this time, she could not.

This project was secured for her by her friend Vivienne, and it was her only lifeline.

If she walked away now, she would disappoint Vivienne and sabotage her career.

Just then, a voice rang out from nearby. Everyone turned to see Stephen live-streaming.

Stephen smiled into his phone, "Thanks for the dono. Yup, I'm on set. No drama here, just actors

discussing the scene. Why would the director casually add scenes for the second lead? All of you book

fans have such high hopes for this adaptation. The director wouldn't dream of tarnishing his reputation."

The camera was pointed directly at the trio of Kala, the director, and Lucia.

The director, taken aback, hurried over.

Stephen generously turned the camera to the director. "Say hello to the viewers."

With a forced chuckle and seeing the chat filled with messages of support for Kala and rejection of

Lucia, the director grew uneasy.

"Director, are we giving the second lead more scenes?" Stephen asked, his smile hiding a challenge.

"Of course not. That would be ridiculous," the director quickly assured.

"And Kala's scenes as the lead, they're faithful to the original story?" Stephen's tone was teasing.

"Absolutely, I assure you. We're sticking to the source material!" The director's face was a mask of discomfort.

Stephen nodded, satisfied. Before ending the live stream, he said, "You hear that, viewers? If it doesn't match the book by the time we wrap, I'll let you know on Twitter. If it's bad, we just won't watch."

Stephen was not lacking in acting offers. He joined this production to please his boss, and bad press would only hurt the director's pocket, not his career.

After that, the director dared not give Lucia any more scenes.

Lucia clenched her fists, turning to Kala, "Wow, cozying up to Stephen now, you little vixen."

"Thanks for the compliment, little fox," Kala shot back, puzzled by Stephen's sudden support.

The next moment, Lucia stepped forward and suddenly slapped Kala right on her face. "You little tramp. Think I can't bury your career? Getting uppity with me? You're out of line!"

Kala did not hesitate to slap Lucia back. "You think I'm made of clay? Push me too far, and I'll ruin you!"

Although her star had fallen and she struggled for roles, it did not mean she would take abuse lying

down. She had been patient because she loved acting.

She could endure anything if her bottom line were not crossed.

But Lucia's relentless provocation was too much. If she had stayed silent any longer, she would not be

Kala!

"Wait and see," Lucia, shocked and angry by the retaliation, did not dare hit back.

Who knew what Kala might do in a rage?

Fuming, Lucia pulled out her phone to call her influential lover at the agency.

"Baby, I want Kala blacklisted right now!"

However, the voice on the other end was furious, "Lucia, you're fired. The company's been bought out

by Rainbow Entertainment for a song. You troublemaker, just you wait!"

As Lucia's call ended, Kala's phone rang. It was Lucia's lover in the agency.

"Kala, can you speak to the boss of Rainbow Entertainment? The buyout is fine, but don't bankrupt me.

I was wrong before; let's forget the past, please..."

Kala was stunned.

Rainbow Entertainment?

That was Stephen's company.

Why would they suddenly buy out Glorious Thought Agency?

Stephen grinned at Kala. "Looks like we're colleagues now. All the best."

Kala blinked, realizing her contract might have been included in the deal with Rainbow Entertainment.

After hanging up, she looked at Stephen, bewildered, "What's going on here?"

After a pause, she added, "Is it Percival? Is he your boss?"

"Of course not, it's Vivienne. Didn't you know?"

Kala was taken aback.

Vivienne?

She knew Vivienne was powerful. Though she had grown up in a temple, her reach was extensive.

The black card alone showed that Vivienne was not short on cash.

But Kala had not realized that Vivienne was the owner of Rainbow Entertainment. She could easily control Glorious Thought Agency.

Rainbow Entertainment was one of the top talent agencies with deep pockets and a strong roster of

award-winning actors.

Moreover, unlike other agencies that trapped them in unfair contracts, they were known for their generous treatment of artists.

At Rainbow Entertainment, artists had true freedom; the company never dictated their career paths and supported whatever they wanted to pursue.

When a celebrity got caught in a scandal, the PR team of their management company would spring into action. But there was a catch: they would not just sweep any mess under the rug. The company would be the first to investigate if one of its talents was in trouble. If they find that the artist had indeed been up to no good, breaking laws and moral codes, they would not hesitate to present the evidence and cut ties with the artist. Updated at Dramanovels.com

No cover-ups, no indulgence, yet they manage to provide a sense of security for their clients.

In other words, the company would have their back as long as the artists focused on their careers and stayed out of trouble.

Back in the day, when the Brooks family was in its prime, they could've easily settled that fee for her.

Yet, to her surprise, she had now joined Rainbow Entertainment, and the boss was none other than Vivienne.

Vivienne had come to her aid again.

A slight tingling sensation pricked at her nose.

She had not reached out to Vivienne all this time, yet she was still willing to help her.

Chapter 450

Kala felt a twinge of guilt twisting in her stomach. She took out her phone and found Vivienne's chat but was at a loss for what to say.

She typed a few words, only to delete them all.

'Thank you' seemed too trivial.

In her heart, Vivienne still irked her, yet there she was, offering help unconditionally.

She did not feel she had the right even to utter those words of gratitude.

After hesitating for a long time, Kala exited the chat and dialed Vivienne's number instead.

"Hello?"

Vivienne's calm voice came through, and Kala bit her lip before speaking up, "Vivienne, I... Thank you."

Vivienne chuckled softly. "Thank me for what? Aren't you my sister?"

The whole Brooks family debacle had started because of her.

Nonetheless, Vivienne genuinely treated Kala's family as one of her own.

Vivienne's circle was small; she valued those who were sincere to her and was always ready to reciprocate.

Besides, the acquisition was a minor matter for her. So minor it was almost trivial.

Kala paused, then suddenly laughed, "Right, I am your elder sister, and you'll always be my little sis."

Who cared about blood relations? She and Vivienne could still be sisters, best friends even.

Vivienne laughed again, "Just don't let me lose money, sis. I'm broke!"

Kala snorted with laughter. "Boss, I'll make sure every dime you spent acquiring the Glory project comes back to you with interest. I'm not any less capable than Stephen."

Vivienne's voice was cheerful as she said, "Great, I'm looking forward to your success."

Another money-maker on the team!

Not bad at all!

After hanging up, Vivienne put away her phone.

Outside her office, Anna knocked on the door. "Ms. Vivienne, it's time to head out."

Vivienne snapped back to reality and stepped out.

Anna still wore her nondescript clothes and those signature black-rimmed glasses, her hair lazily draped over her shoulders.

Vivienne frowned. "Can't you try a different look?"

Now that Anna was with her year-round, she no longer needed such disguises.

Anna sheepishly scratched her head, saying, "I guess I'm just used to it."

Vivienne took off Anna's glasses. "After the lab, let's get you some new clothes."

They were spending money before it was even earned – not exactly cost-effective!

Anna nodded.

She had to follow Ms. Vivienne's lead; that was the first rule handed down by Wolf when she took on the assignment.

...

In the YQ lab, everyone was busily engaged in various experiments.

Only Rex, with his signature silver-rimmed glasses, squatted on the floor, studying a potion's

decomposition simulation.

He seemed out of place, like a misfit.

"Why is it like this? Why are only three components separated? It's a toxin; how can it have healing properties?"

Rex mumbled to himself, oblivious to Vivienne's approach.

Vivienne bent down beside him, looking at the simulation. "All drugs have their poison. Even the best medicine can harm if misused. Is that so hard to understand?"

Rex did not even look up, "No, no, no, I mean, it shouldn't be producing a healing effect. The dosage, this data... And a toxin seeking to heal what, exactly?"

Vivienne's lips curled slightly.

The potions left by her mother were lethal; a mere milliliter could kill a robust adult, even more potent than Boar Poison.

That was why, over the years, she had been developing an antidote.

In the analysis process, she discovered that the potion produced a healing effect under certain

accidental conditions.

With this discovery, she combined multiple viruses with the potion.

The viruses were not decomposed; they were consumed by the potion, forming new strains.

And these were even more virulent.

There was no denying that the potion's healing effect consumed the viruses, but the new strains were

far too aggressive to be beneficial.

Rex's question was precisely what she had sought to understand for years.

Vivienne glanced at Rex. "Figuring out what it truly wants to heal will take time."

Rex nodded. "You have a point."

As he finally turned to look at Vivienne, his eyes lit up. "It's you! I knew you'd be the only one in the lab

who'd understand what I'm talking about."

Vivienne's smile deepened. "You're a genius."

"That's what they say." Rex preened, confident in his abilities.

Vivienne eyed him. "Never met your match, I take it?"

Rex's expression darkened.

Jealousy, anger, and frustration flickered in his eyes. Clearly, he was holding back rage, crushing his

grievances in his palm, "No, I've met my match."

Vivienne narrowed her eyes slightly. "Well then, good luck."

With that, she left the YQ lab with Anna.

Anna tried to make sense of the potion's decomposition simulation in the car but could not see the pattern.

"I'm still too green," she admitted, comparing herself to her mother, who had been a key aide to Lark, while she could only learn from Vivienne's side.

"Don't worry, genius isn't an easy path," Vivienne said, her gaze flicking to the rear-view mirror.

Anna's mouth twitched. "Are you showing off?"

Vivienne cornered with a sleek drift, "Nope, just telling it like it is."

Anna looked up, finally noticing something amiss. She glanced back, her eyes narrowing. "Got a tail again?"

"Yep, let's play a little game." Vivienne stepped on the accelerator, heading towards the city center

mall.

Vivienne drove leisurely into the mall's underground parking, then took the elevator up with Anna.

As the elevator doors slid shut, Anna caught a glimpse of an inconspicuous white sedan gliding into the parking lot alongside them.

Anna shook her head.

"It's because he was too anxious," Vivienne said radiantly. "Relax a little. The real show is just getting started."

To Anna's surprise, Vivienne really did mean to relax.

...

Percival was in the middle of a video conference on the other side of town.

Notification after notification of payment alerts popped up on his phone. Updated at Drămanovels.com

Thomas and everyone else in the meeting teased, "Percival, you sure your credit card hasn't been compromised?"

But Percival just chuckled.

The little lady was finally spending his money.

This was a splendid beginning!

He muted his phone and sent Vivienne a quick text, [Get something for yourself too.]

At the mall.

Anna wobbled the shopping bags in her hand. "Ms. Vivienne, I think I've shopped for all my eighteen years in one go."

Vivienne handed Anna an iced latte.

With a silent sigh, Anna took the cup, noticing Vivienne's fingertips touch the cup lightly in several spots.

Anna's gaze sharpened.

Poison!

But Vivienne, unaffected, placed a pair of freshly bought sunglasses onto Anna's face. "You do it," she said.