

## **Million-Dollar 481**

### Chapter 481

At the Perez Mansion.

Jasper, balancing a box of strawberry shortcake, made his way inside.

Natalia and Yasmine blinked their dewy eyes and scampered towards Jasper in unison.

Zelda was engrossed in a YouTube tutorial, trying to master the art of the perfect strawberry shortcake.

"Dad, didn't you go play chess with Richard? What brings you back so soon?" Zelda asked, setting

aside her lopsided whipped cream to greet him.

Jasper opened the shortcake box and divided it into two generous slices for the eagerly waiting Natalia

and Yasmine.

He waved off her concern with a smile. "Richard got wind that Vivienne and her grandson leaped off a

cliff. Rushed off to check on them."

Zelda gasped, startled. She had been preoccupied with her cake-making venture all day and had not

caught any news. "A cliff? What happened?"

"Nothing serious, just a rescue mission. Vivienne and Percival are quite the capable pair," Jasper

chuckled.

Jasper had known about Vivienne and Percival's heroic act at the racetrack since the previous night and had already dispatched Yuri to gather details. Even the intel about the engineer had been discreetly passed on to Leopold by Yuri.

So, his worry had long since passed.

Zelda breathed a sigh of relief. "You gave me quite the scare. I'll have to remind Vivienne to steer clear of danger next time. How terrifying."

Jasper glanced at the yard, where beaten eggs and cream were strewn about – even on Natalia and Yasmine. Sighing, he said, "Zelda, maybe you should steer clear of danger yourself."

Zelda rubbed her nose with a grin. "No worries, I'm safe. The oven hasn't exploded yet."

Jasper did not protest further. His daughter-in-law was always chasing whims; last time, it was an obsession with braiding Natalia and Yasmine's hair, which nearly ended with the girls being bald.

Now, it was strawberry shortcake, and who knew how long that phase would last?

As they were talking, Yuri arrived home, also carrying a box of strawberry shortcake, and began to clean up the eggshells from the girls. "Zelda, have Eva wash them. Look at their little faces."

Zelda put down her utensils, knowing Yuri had matters to discuss with Jasper, and took the girls to bathe.

In the yard, Jasper shut off the oven Zelda had left on and asked, "What's the situation?"

"CK's people have definitely been spotted in Rivenwood, but we're unsure if it's the same F-Poison from back then. I've looked into the engineer you mentioned, but there's not much to go on apart from his connection to CK."

Yuri helped Jasper sit in a wicker chair. "Another thing – Percival and his right-hand man have been suspended, and Leopold's been reassigned to the outskirts, away from core operations. Apparently, Fiona submitted a statement to the higher-ups involving some confidential matter, but there's scant evidence."

Jasper nodded. "Take care of it. We can't let them get the upper hand."

"Understood," Yuri agreed, and just as he was about to leave, Jasper stopped him with his cane, pointing at the chaotic front yard. "Clean this up and find a proper place for your wife to bake, would you?"

Yuri sighed silently. "Zelda bake? If she can separate eggs without making a mess, I'd call it a miracle."

He looked at the bowls of unsuccessfully separated eggs, already dreading the egg-heavy meals

ahead. In the Perez Mansion, nothing went to waste!

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After Vivienne returned from the Ellington family, Anna came home from school to find Thaddeus doing homework in the living room.

Her tutoring style was nothing like Charlotte's. It was cold efficiency, but it got results – unlike Charlotte, who would play with Thaddeus after just a brief study session.

"Ms. Vivienne, you're back," Anna said, ruffling Thaddeus's hair and handing him a PSP. "Time's up. Go play."

"Thanks, Anna!" Thaddeus finished his last stroke, grabbed the PSP, and scampered to his room for some advanced Sudoku.

The two women entered Vivienne's bedroom, and Anna closed the door firmly behind them. "Ms.

Vivienne, I can't reach headquarters, but Hotshot sent me a coded message telling me not to report in for a while. I don't know what's happening."

Vivienne nodded. "Alright, I got it."

"I have this feeling that headquarters is trying to sideline the captain's people. Husky's been sent to the outskirts, Captain Charlotte's been suspended, Hotshot is on standby without details, and the third squad has been scattered. There aren't many left under Hotshot's command."

Anna looked worriedly at Vivienne. "Is something going to happen?"

Vivienne sprawled lazily on the bed. "How's Aaron?"

"I wait for Mark to pick him up before I leave each day. All the tails Quincy sent have been dealt with."

"The net's closing. Play bodyguard for a few more days, and it'll be over," Vivienne said, stretching on the bed, feeling sleepy after the evening meal.

Anna looked a bit embarrassed. "Ms. Vivienne, how many more days till it's done?"

Curious, Vivienne turned to face Anna, propping her head with one hand. "What's up?"

Anna bit her lip, her expression troubled. "It's just... Kenneth. He's a bit of a nuisance."

Oh?

Vivienne perked up – unexpected gossip?

Seeing Vivienne's eager look, Anna's mouth twitched. "It's nothing major, but Kenneth keeps hanging

around Elite University, getting in the way. It's hard to get things done, and he even..."

Anna's voice trailed off, leaving Vivienne all ears for the latest drama unfolding.

"He what?" Vivienne sat up, clutching her throw pillow, and stared at Anna with wide eyes.

Anna heaved a weary sigh, "He even paraded around with a bouquet of roses every day. It's like he's begging for attention. It's so annoying."

Ever since she was little, Anna had kept her existence under wraps. At first, even Vivienne hardly noticed her presence.

Whether it was back in Havenwood or now at Elite University, Anna had always managed to blend into the background. Even when she took the initiative to team up with the popular Aaron, it barely caused a ripple.

But now, Kenneth had to turn it all upside down, marching behind her with his ostentatious roses, cooing 'Anna' at every turn.

The whole campus was buzzing with the news that Anna was the latest conquest of Kenneth, the rising star of the E-sports world.

Rumors of a love triangle between Kenneth, Anna, and Aaron were rampant. There were even fanfics cropping up on the university forums with titles like “Gamer King’s Love” and “Invisible Girl Caught in the Spotlight...”

It was driving Anna mad!

And since Kenneth was Percival’s brother, she could not just get rid of him even if she wanted to!

Besides, Quincy had her spies all around – not that Quincy was a problem herself, but in such a crowded place, Anna had to be patient and endure Kenneth’s antics without lashing out.

Vivienne burst into laughter after a few seconds of stunned silence.

Hooking a finger under Anna’s chin with a mischievous grin, she teased, “Girl, looks like someone’s got a crush on you.”

Anna felt like her face was on fire, “Stop it! I could never fall for Kenneth!”

Vivienne chuckled. “Sort out your own love life. As for the mission, it’s coming up soon.”

Indeed, it was almost time.

Anyone who needed to be dealt with would be dealt with.

Just then, Vivienne’s phone rang. It was Percival.

Anna did not want to eavesdrop, so she turned and left.

Vivienne answered the call. "Mr. Wolf!"

"Half an hour after Fiona left home, she was rushed to the hospital. She's in critical condition and in the

ER right now. The doctors say it's a complete organ failure."

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Vivienne was taken aback.

This was something she had not anticipated.

When she had left the Ellington estate, everything seemed fine.

Fiona had been the picture of health, her cheeks flushed with life, showing no signs of organ failure.

"I reckon someone will give you a call," Percival spoke through sobs, which Vivienne guessed

belonged to Heloise.

Vivienne reassured him calmly, "Don't worry."

With a brief acknowledgment, they ended the call.

Vivienne lay on her bed, but her phone buzzed to life before long.

It was Flynn.



"Vivienne, it's Flynn, Percival's uncle. I hate to bother you this late, but could you come to the hospital?"

It's Fiona... She's on her last legs."

Vivienne raised an eyebrow, a lazy smirk playing on her lips as she rested a hand on her temple.

"What's the trouble?"

"Fiona's got complete organ failure. The family told me it was you who brought my dad back from the

brink. Could you please come and work your magic on Fiona? Let bygones be bygones and help us

save her, will you?"

Hearing Flynn's choked-up voice, Vivienne's smile widened. "Alright! I'm on my way."

Flynn exhaled a sigh of relief. "Thank you, Vivienne, thank you."

Vivienne chuckled, "No sweat. You're Mr. Wolf's most respected uncle."

Flynn fell silent on the other end as if catching the hidden meaning in her words. But he said no more

and hung up.

Twenty minutes later.

Vivienne arrived at the hospital to find Percival waiting by the entrance.

Seeing Vivienne had not even bothered with a coat, he draped his trench coat over her shoulders.

"What's the rush?"

"Uncle Flynn called. How could I not hurry?" Vivienne said with a soft, playful smile as she and Percival made their way to the surgical floor where Fiona was.

Heloise was still on the floor, wailing incessantly, cursing Vivienne as the cause of all evil.

Upon seeing Vivienne, Heloise charged at her. "What are you doing here, you little wretch? Come to gloat over my daughter, have you? Let me tell you, if anything happens to her, I'll make sure you pay.

Even after I become a ghost, I'll haunt you forever!"

Vivienne looked down at Heloise with a deeper smile, one that did not seem sincere at all. "Would you rather I turn you into a ghost now?"

Heloise collapsed to the floor, trembling. For a moment, she thought she saw the spirits of the dead clinging to Vivienne.

Flynn approached with the medical reports, and seeing Heloise making a scene, he dragged her away.

"Heloise, stay out of Fiona's business from now on!"

With Heloise around, she was nothing but trouble.

He then turned to Vivienne, saying, "Don't take it to heart, Vivienne. Heloise's gone a bit mad. The hospital has agreed to let you into the OR. Fiona's personal physician, Sienna, will assist you there."

Vivienne handed the trench coat back to Percival and took the reports from Flynn. "Okay."

With that, she entered the operating room.

Cecilia was by Richard's side. Although her feelings towards Fiona had cooled, she still worried for her, having watched her grow up.

Percival sat beside his grandfather and mother, waiting quietly for Vivienne to emerge.

Flynn paced nervously, and Imogen, unsure what to say, simply stood by his side.

Heloise was still shaken by her hallucination of Vivienne, cowering in the corner.

Inside the OR, Vivienne donned surgical scrubs and joined the team.

Including Calista, there were five doctors.

"Mrs. Ellington, we've been waiting for you. Ms. Fiona is critical; we don't have much time," Calista handed Vivienne a scalpel. "Let's begin."

Vivienne took the scalpel, turning her back to Calista, and began the operation on Fiona.

She was focused, her eyes shifting between the monitors and Fiona, seemingly unaware of the five

people surrounding her.

Standing behind Vivienne with a scalpel in hand, Calista looked menacingly at her back.

She signaled to two others, each holding a rope, trying to loop it around Vivienne from behind. Their

plan to restrain her failed miserably as the ropes they had knotted snapped. Taken by surprise, they

stumbled and fell to the floor.

The others lunged at Vivienne with their scalpels, but she remained calm, dexterously removing the

toxin-infected parts from Fiona's kidney.

In the next instant, the two closest to Vivienne collapsed, blood spewing from their mouths.

Still not looking up, Vivienne switched to another instrument, moving to Fiona's heart.

The first two assailants, back on their feet, drew knives and charged at her. Vivienne kicked a nearby

tray stand, sending it crashing into them. They fell, their hands pinned under the heavy stand, unable to

move without tearing off their limbs.

Calista could not believe how easily Vivienne had dispatched four skilled attackers as if they were

nothing.

Clutching her scalpel, Calista realized she was still behind Vivienne. She still had a chance...

"Dr. Sienna, how does having facial reconstruction feel?" Vivienne's voice was calm, her attention

never straying from her delicate work. "Or perhaps I should address you as Calista Pendleton. It seems

more fitting."

Amid their heated exchange, Vivienne, with cold precision, sliced Fiona's heart in half and tossed it into

the trash can.

Calista was taken aback. She never expected Vivienne to see through her disguise so easily.

With nothing left to hide, Calista, brandishing a scalpel, charged at her adversary, "Vivienne, I swear,

you're dead meat."

But Vivienne sidestepped with an effortless grace, and to Calista's horror, her blade sank deep into

Fiona's thigh instead.

Fiona, previously unconscious, suddenly coughed up a gush of blood and looked on in despair, her

eyes wide with the betrayal they witnessed.

Vivienne's laugh was radiant, dazzling like sunshine, "Oops, looks like I turned off your anesthesia."

Fiona could not utter a word.

To be conscious and aware after having half of her heart cut out and lying there, gutted, was a terror unto itself.

Calista, fury in her eyes, yanked the scalpel from Fiona's leg and swung at Vivienne again.

Vivienne merely stepped back, and Calista, not watching her step, tripped over the two bleeding figures on the floor.

Her scalpel, following her gaze, plunged straight into her brain through her eye socket.

Calista screamed.

Almost casually, Vivienne popped a life-saving pill into Calista's mouth and gestured towards Fiona.

"Don't fret. I'll patch Fiona up first."

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Fiona lay on the operating table, her eyes wide with horror as she watched Vivienne slice away her

necrotic organs before stitching her abdomen back together. Machines that signified the waning of her

life were now, bit by bit, displaying signs of vitality.

Speechless, Fiona could only gawk at Vivienne with her mouth half-open, like a dummy.

Having finished the last stitch, Vivienne scrutinized Fiona's belly, frowning deeply. "This won't do. It's

unsightly. I'll have to redo everything," she lamented, and with those words, she began to undo the stitches.

Fiona heard the sutures tearing through her skin but felt no pain. Yet the phantom agony in her mind, coupled with the sight before her, tormented her so fiercely that death seemed a sweet release.

Vivienne repeated the process three times until, at last, she was satisfied.

"Fiona, darling, was it worth risking your life for White Tiger?" Vivienne covered Fiona's body, and as she spoke, she lifted Calista—who had a scalpel stuck in her eye—off the table and dropped her into a nearby chair.

Fiona's head was immobilized; she could only glance sideways to see.

"When will you tire of these little games? There's no thrill left in it." Vivienne sighed, pulling the scalpel from Calista's eye. Blood followed the blade, splattering Fiona's face.

Calista screamed, her fingers trembling uncontrollably, her mind teetering on the brink of unconsciousness but unable to succumb. One eye was a bloody, hollow mess; the other brimmed with pleas no one heeded.

Vivienne scooped out the useless eyeball with a clinical detachment and tossed it into the trash like

yesterday's leftovers.

Calista, now half-blind, was easier to manage this way—for Vivienne had little patience for those unwilling to cling to life.

Numb to it all, Calista knelt on the floor, her voice a broken record of mercy pleas. "Vivienne, please... I won't dare again, never again..."

She had now realized that Vivienne was a fearsome force, eclipsing even the infamous F-Poison.

Calista had once thought that having her bones shattered by F-Poison was the height of suffering, yet in Vivienne's grip, that was mere child's play.

Unmoved by the begging, Vivienne dusted Calista's empty socket with a powder. "This will save your life," she said thoughtfully.

"A Life-saving pill goes for five million, but this powder—it's twice that. Plus my services... you owe me a fortune, Calista. How will you repay?" Vivienne mused, shaking her head.

Calista's mind was a void; she would agree to anything Vivienne said.

"I'll do whatever you want," she whispered.



"Good," Vivienne nodded. "Then you'll work for Rex. He needs an assistant—a capable one."

Rex, who actually was Brody, from the YQ Lab had contacted Vivienne with an unusual request some time ago. He needed a human subject for an experiment, assuring her it would not be life-threatening.

Initially, she had refused, but Calista seemed a fitting candidate now.

A medical prodigy herself, Calista could be a valuable asset to Brody's work.

Shivering, Calista faced her uncertain future while Fiona, still on the table, could feel her body healing and breaking in equal measures.

Checking the monitors, Vivienne noted, "Not bad, recovery's on track."

She began to remove the tubes from Fiona. "But how will you repay me?"

Fiona shuddered inwardly, her body still immobile.

"Never mind, I'll hand you over to Mr. Wolf," Vivienne decided, covering Fiona with a blanket. "I forgot to mention, you're bedridden for life now."

Fiona would be in perpetual agony, her organs forever on the brink of collapse, unable to even contemplate suicide.

Vivienne wheeled Fiona out and discreetly removed Calista.

Everyone thought Fiona was on the mend, save for her newfound muteness.

Heloise cried a single sincere tear, mourning the loss of her comfortable life as much as her daughter's plight.

Flynn and Richard hovered over Fiona while Vivienne exchanged a brief word with Percival and left the hospital. She had other pressing matters, or else Brody's messages would become a nuisance.

After sending Vivienne and Calista, now concealed in a trash bag, onto the car to be taken away by Anna, Percival received a call from headquarters.

"I'm on my way," he said before hanging up and casting one last look at the bustling Ellington family, the people he had grown up with and held dear.

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The next morning, Vivienne arrived at the YQ Lab, fresh from a restful sleep in the car.

She popped the trunk and unfurled the trash bag, revealing Calista, who had curled up during the bumpy ride.

Blinking open her one remaining eye, Calista's world was blurrier than ever.

She tumbled out of the trunk, her body aching all over. "Where... where is this?" She croaked.

Anna, silent as ever, followed Vivienne into the lab, which looked the same as ever, save for the half-finished 3D bio-printer.

Upon seeing Vivienne, Holden hurried over. "Ma'am, are you here for Rex?"

Vivienne nodded as Holden gestured toward the innermost lab, "Right in there, go ahead."

Other researchers in the lab steered clear of Brody's domain. The last time Holden had rushed in with urgent business, he nearly got gassed. It was only after popping one of Rex's pills that he had recovered.

Since then, no one dared venture too close.

Equipping Anna and Calista with gas masks, Vivienne pushed open the heavy door to Brody's lab.

"Damn it, not again! This is infuriating! Vivienne, you asshole!" Brody had not noticed her entry.

Cursing Vivienne's name whenever an experiment failed was his way of venting.

Vivienne frowned. "What did you just say?"

Startled, Brody looked up, his eyes lighting up upon seeing Vivienne, "Perfect timing! Take a look at this concoction. I can't shake the feeling it's meant for something other than poisoning. There's another

purpose, but I can't figure it out."

He seemed to have forgotten the insult he'd just hurled at her.

Vivienne's gaze followed the potion, which was breaking down into various cells and recombining

endlessly. The healing properties it was producing were becoming more apparent.

She had always wanted to develop an antidote for the potion but had not expected it to start isolating

healing cells on its own.

Curious.

By then, Brody had taken notice of Calista, missing an eye, and gave her a once-over, "Is this my new

test subject?"

Vivienne nodded. "Are you pleased?"

"Pleased, indeed. Come here, let's try this injection on you." With a swift motion, Brody administered

the shot to Calista, who convulsed instantly.

Vivienne barely noticed, her attention fixed on the cellular structure emerging from the potion.

"Mom! What is the true nature of this potion?" She wondered.

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Vivienne glared at the scene for a solid thirty minutes before she finally averted her gaze.

At that moment, Calista had just danced with the reaper, her toes still dangling over the edge of the abyss.

"Easy there, I just tossed away her eyeball yesterday," Vivienne remarked dryly, casting a sidelong glance at Brody.

Brody nodded in understanding. "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

As they spoke, the poison coursing through Calista's veins was neutralized.

Vivienne did not linger. She motioned for Anna to follow, and they left the lab.

The moment she shut the door, Brody's voice boomed from inside, "Vivienne, you're a real asshole!"

Anna peered through the glass and saw Brody awkwardly propped up on hands and feet, his head stretched upward, resembling a turtle stuck on its back.

"Ms. Vivienne, you sure take revenge promptly," Anna said with a quiet chuckle, giving Vivienne the thumbs up.

Vivienne flicked her hair dismissively. She was not about to take Brody's scolding for nothing.

"Let's go," she said, looping an arm around Anna's neck as they exited the lab.

Just as they approached the car, both women tensed and swiftly rolled away to either side.

Two tranquilizer darts thudded into the seat where they had just stood.

Vivienne stood by the car's rear, her face a storm as she eyed the direction from which the darts had come.

Anna, positioned at the front, looked in the opposite direction with equal vigilance.

Suddenly, operatives wearing the uniforms of the Vanguard Agency special squad emerged from all around, led by none other than Soren.

Clad in tactical gear and goggles, Soren's surprise was evident even through his battle-hardened facade. "It's you?"

Vivienne's expression remained calm and unreadable.

It was clear from Soren's face that he had only discovered upon arrival that his target was Vivienne.

Interesting.

This Vanguard Agency that swore to protect the nation and its people.

Seeing Vivienne silent, Soren paused before addressing Anna, "Anna, rejoin the squad!"

He did not understand why they were after Vivienne. But she was now a suspect.

Anna was a Vanguard operative, duty-bound to comply!

Anna shot him a frosty glare. "Rejoin my foot!"

Vivienne's lip twitched, a silent message to Anna, "You've been hanging out with Leopold too much."

After just a few days, the once-sweet girl had adopted Leopold's brash language.

"I order you as Squad Leader to fall back into line!" Soren barked.

Anna stepped behind Vivienne, "My orders from Commander Percival are clear: protect Vivienne at all costs, no matter who the opposition is."

Soren did not argue further, just sighed heavily. He glanced at the order on his display, then aimed his weapon at Vivienne, "Vivienne Hawthorn, You're under arrest. Lay down your arms and surrender."

Vivienne tilted her head slightly, "And the charges?"

Soren pursed his lips. "Evidence suggests you're the mastermind behind CK, known as White Tiger."

Vivienne nearly laughed out loud, "What evidence?"

Then, a figure emerged from behind the Vanguard agents. He limped, leaning on a cane, his left leg clearly injured.

Vivienne's eyes narrowed on the approaching figure. She had never met him in person, but his face

had been etched into her memory since she was five.

Her mother's old partner, Micah.

Micah stopped about 700 feet before her and smiled, "You look so much like your mother, Karen."

"Thanks, I get that a lot," Vivienne replied with a hollow smile, "But let's skip the trip down memory lane and get to business."

Micah nodded. "Fair point. Let's talk about the matter at hand."

He presented a written confession.

"This is from Black Dragon, also known as Fiona, CK's second in command. Three days ago, she confessed to earn more time outside prison, implicating you in every crime she committed on your orders, and the illicit funds you transferred using Commander Percival's influence."

Vivienne nodded. "Is there more?"

"Of course," Micah flipped to another page, "Here's footage from the club where you handed off the

Boar Poison to Fiona and the transaction records to the engineer who attempted to take out Carl. Only



your fingerprint could authorize that transfer. You can't deny it."

Vivienne nodded again. "You're right."

Micah handed the confession and evidence to Soren, then addressed Vivienne, "Next, we'll be seizing this lab, the film studio down at Eastlake Bay, all properties in your name, and we'll be monitoring all your close contacts, including Dorian's family, the Brooks family of Rivenwood, your associate Anna, and Percival's family."

Vivienne finally let out a laugh. "So, are you planning to monitor these people or use them to threaten me?"

Micah's eyes flickered, but he did not respond.

His silence was as good as an admission.

Vivienne rolled her neck, scanning the circle of agents. "Just so you know, you probably can't take us down."

"I'm aware of your pharmaceutical skills. Your life-saving pills were distributed to everyone here by

Percival. We should be resistant to your poisons, right?" Micah smirked slyly at Vivienne, the cunning in his eyes undeniable.

Vivienne clicked her tongue. "Never thought I'd be in a bind because of my own Life-saving pill. But

since you've partaken, remember to pay up. Five million a pop, but for Mr. Wolf's sake, I'll give you a

20% discount."

"Wasn't it supposed to be free?" Micah raised his hand.

Vivienne twirled her wrist. "Free for Mr. Wolf, not for you—we're not exactly chums."

Micah gave a wry smile as his hand fell back to his side.

All the team members, except for Soren, stepped forward.

Soren hesitated for a few seconds before he, too, shuffled his feet forward.

Anna was braced for battle, her sights set on Soren. Taking him down would deter the group from any

foolishness.

On the other hand, Vivienne casually leaned against the trunk of the SUV and, with a graceful leap,

perched herself atop it.

She spread her palm and shielded her eyes from the harsh sunlight, gazing into the distance.

Micah sensed something was amiss when a series of dry clicks echoed from behind.

Soren was the first to whirl around, bearing down on the source of the noise.

What he saw left him frozen in place.

The other team members were equally perplexed, unsure how to respond to the turn of events.

Anna relaxed her stance and turned to Vivienne, "Ms. Vivienne, what's the play here?"

Vivienne feigned contemplation. "I'd say, a knight in shining armor scenario."

Anna choked a bit—"knight in shining armor' indeed.

Micah also turned and saw Percival striding towards them, fully geared.

Percival removed his goggles, revealing eyes that shimmered with a noble chill under the sunlight.

Behind him followed Leopold and Thomas.

Micah kept his cool, taking a few steps forward with a smirk, "Should I address you as Captain Percival now or Chief Percival?"

"Deputy, like yourself," Percival replied, tapping the badge on his shoulder, now adorned with an additional star.

Micah pursed his lips. "Got your orders?"

"Just came through. It should've been delivered to your office by now. But I'm still leading the special

squad, so we'll be collaborating." Percival pulled out another document, "Also, all the charges Fiona

leveled against Vivienne have been deemed baseless. Here are the papers."

Percival's eyes crinkled with a hint of pride. "Have a look!"

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Micah scrutinized each document that Percival had brought in. It was all there: the irrefutable evidence

that exonerated Vivienne, Fiona's confession to setting her up, and Calista's damning testimony on

how she had stolen Vivienne's fingerprints and plotted a murder in the OR.

Without a doubt, Vivienne was innocent.

With an indifferent curl of his slightly chapped lips, Micah returned the papers to Percival. "Good job,"

he said, the understatement hanging between them like a silent applause.

Percival locked eyes with Micah, his mentor at the Vanguard Agency, second only to Karen in authority.

A crooked smile formed on his lips. "I think so too. I did do a damn good job!"

Their gaze held for a heavy moment, neither man breaking the silence.

The air grew thick with tension.

Leopold, Thomas, and Soren, who was standing off to the side, all watched Micah intently. They knew

Micah had been obstructing their every move, sidelining the Vanguard Agency, and keeping everyone out of the loop—everyone except Soren, whom he had left in the dark about the true purpose of their mission.

Those who made it into the Vanguard Agency were no fools; Micah's actions were purposeful. But the question that hung over them was why he targeted Vivienne and Percival. Was it a personal vendetta, or were there strings being pulled from behind the scenes?

After what seemed an eternity, Micah finally broke into a grin. "Well, the higher-ups have spoken.

Vivienne is free to go."

He paused before adding, "But let's be clear, she might not be so lucky next time. If she's tangled up with CK, I won't look the other way, not even for you."

Percival chuckled. "There won't be a next time. If Vivienne ever breaks the law, you won't need to get involved. I'll bring her in myself, Micah."

How he would 'bring her in' was another matter entirely.

Micah's eyes narrowed, his voice chilling. "Let's hope it doesn't come to that."

In the past, Percival would have addressed him as 'boss,' but now, not even that courtesy was

extended. The kid had grown up, out of his control.

Adjusting his goggles, Percival did not linger. Instead, he waved to his brothers-in-arms. "Wrap it up.

Micah's buying dinner tonight."

Now at equal footing with Micah as a deputy director and head of the special squad, Percival's word was law. The team responded enthusiastically, though a few still looked to Micah for confirmation.

After a moment of silence, Micah's face became an impassive mask. "Alright, dinner's on me tonight."

Cheers erupted from the crowd, but everyone knew the Vanguard Agency of Rivenwood was under new management.

Micah was the first to leave for headquarters, while Soren stayed behind with the team.

"Cap, about earlier... I'm sorry," Soren said to Percival. Even though he did not like Vivienne, he would never treat her as a criminal without just cause.

When Soren saw the mission was targeting Vivienne, he, too, was shocked. But as the captain of Vanguard Agency's third special squad, he could not back down even if the target had been his mother.

Percival merely glanced at him. "It's your duty. Why apologize?"

Soren bit his lip, unsure of what to say next.

Vivienne appraised him. He seemed stronger than before; his injuries healed. If he were to spar with

Anna now, the outcome would be uncertain.

After a few seconds of silence, Soren led his squad out, pausing only to say to Anna, "Back on duty tomorrow."

Anna snapped a salute. "Yes, Captain."

He gave her a lingering look as if to say, "Now you remember who's your captain, after that earlier outburst, telling me 'rejoin my foot'?"

With the special squad gone, Vivienne and Percival also headed back to the city.

In the car, Anna was still puzzled. How had Percival become the deputy director of the Vanguard Agency?

Thinking about that, she asked the question out loud.

Leopold, driving, knew they could speak freely among themselves. "Percival went over a few heads and reported the capture of Belle directly to the top brass. It was against protocol, but someone big vouched for him, saying he may be young, but his record and education are top-notch. Without a

promotion, they'd risk demoralizing the front line troops. So, he got the job."

Trying to make sense of Leopold's rambling, Anna grasped a key question. "Who helped from the inside?"

Percival and Vivienne shared a knowing glance and a smile but said nothing.

Leopold paused, then asked, "Yeah, who was it? They've got some serious clout!"

He had been too busy celebrating Percival's promotion to wonder about the benefactor. Now, thanks to Anna's question, he realized the significance of the support.

With their current ranks, any further promotion would be an uphill battle.

Take him for example. If he were to be promoted, other than making some astonishing achievements, he would have to wait for Percival to be transferred to have a chance at the position of captain. Even so, he would still have to compete with Thomas and Soren. Promotion was no easy task for him.

The realization that Percival had been promoted to deputy director while his disciplinary action was staggering.

Leopold kept pressing, but Percival stayed mum, almost driving Leopold so angry he could barely keep



driving. The mystery of the benefactor had just added another layer of intrigue to their already complex lives.

Vivienne had reached her limit. She slapped the back of the driver's seat and barked, "Griffin!"

Griffin had her fingers in the pie, for sure. But the real movers and shakers were the Perez family.

Thanks to their inside help, Percival managed to get the news of Belle's arrest back to headquarters, bypassing several layers of bureaucracy.

By excluding Micah and those two unnamed individuals, it became even more evident that the traitor was among the three of them.

Micah, Blue Sky, and Rover.

Even Percival had never met Blue Sky or Rover in person.

Only those at the deputy director level or higher had that clearance.

But soon, Percival would have the opportunity to meet the other two and sniff out the mole.

When Leopold heard it was Griffin, he zipped his lips. He knew Griffin would come in handy, but her role was undoubtedly minor.

That said, he dared not probe further.

Ever since Griffin's last call, there had been radio silence, with no replies to his messages, and his

visits to Griffin's place met with a locked door.

What a mess!

Just the mention of Griffin's name was enough to keep him in line now.

The car finally quieted down.

Percival intended to drop Vivienne off at her place, but Richard's call came halfway there.

"Percival, come home. There's trouble."

Percival immediately rerouted and headed back to the Ellington Mansion.

Upon arriving, Vivienne and Percival got out together while Leopold and Anna waited outside.

As they entered, they were met with the sound of Imogen crying.

"What happened?" Percival inquired.

Isolde ran into Percival's arms, "Brother, I'm so scared. Please check on Uncle Flynn."

Flynn was on the couch, comforting Imogen, with no visible injuries.

But on the table, there was a dagger just like the one previously stuck in the front door of the Ellington

Mansion.

Impaled on the dagger was a note — [Give her back!]

Chapter 486

Percival's face darkened.

Vivienne picked up the note, her icy eyes narrowing slightly. "Where did you find this?"

With a sigh, Flynn replied, "When I woke up this morning, it was on my nightstand. Imogen and I saw it straight away."

Cecilia was visibly shaken. "Our security system is state-of-the-art. There were no signs of a break-in last night. How could someone have slipped a knife under our noses? It's absolutely terrifying."

After a pause, Cecilia shot a hesitant glance at Imogen. "I don't mean anything by it. I'm just curious...

Any chance your ex might be lurking around Rivenwood?"

Imogen dabbed at her eyes. "Cecilia, Flynn was my first love. I never had a boyfriend before him, and few guys were interested in me. Even if there were, they're all abroad now. I have no clue what this note means."

Flynn pulled Imogen into his arms, soothing her with gentle strokes on her back. "I know it's not you.

Stop crying."

Feeling a twinge of guilt, Cecilia offered her a tissue, joining Flynn in comforting her.

Vivienne handed the note to Percival.

They all knew that this note was asking for Belle.

Clearly, someone was getting impatient.

Belle, undoubtedly, was harboring secrets.

For some time now, Vivienne had kept Belle hidden in a place no one would suspect without pressing her for information.

After all, she already knew what she needed to know. Except for the information about the boss of GTO!

But Vivienne was in no rush. The guy would slip up when the time was right.

"I'll handle this," Percival said, tucking the note away and giving Isolde, who was still in his arms, a reassuring hug. The child's face had turned pale with fear.

Percival upgraded the Ellington family's security to the highest level, changed all the locks, and reinforced the windows and all other potential entry points.

Now, not even a fly could sneak in unnoticed.

After calming Imogen, Flynn left her with Cecilia and Vivienne, then joined Percival and Richard in the study.

They needed to ponder the audacity of leaving a knife by someone's bed.

Flynn had just returned from abroad and was unlikely to have offended anyone. The culprit had to be one of the Ellington family's old enemies.

"Percival, all good on your end?" Richard inquired.

"Yeah," Percival responded.

"Dad, could it be a corporate rival?" Flynn asked.

Richard scoffed. "Unlikely. The note spoke of giving back someone, and the Ellington family haven't taken anyone. It seems someone's got their sights on our family. Stay vigilant, especially you, Percival."

Richard tapped the floor with his cane, signaling his point to Percival.

Richard knew all too well that if anyone was stirring up trouble, it was Percival.

For years, though he never meddled in Percival's affairs, Richard was aware that his grandson was involved in perilously high-stakes business not meant for the faint-hearted.

The last time a knife was planted at the Ellington Mansion, Richard already discovered that Percival had done something dangerous.

However, he never expected the danger to invade Flynn's bedroom.

Percival nodded. "Don't worry, Grandpa."

Richard pressed no further.

...

Back in the living room.

Tears still stained Imogen's cheeks. The shock had hit her hard.

It was not surprising, though. Anyone who wakes to find a knife looming over them would be petrified.

And for someone as naturally timid as Imogen, it was all the more frightening.

Vivienne placed a hand on Imogen's shoulder. Imogen flinched, then quickly apologized, "Sorry,

Vivienne, I'm just really on edge."

"It's okay. Let me help you relax," Vivienne said, unaffected.

Imogen nodded, gathering her waterfall-like hair to one side, allowing Vivienne to ease the tension in

her neck and shoulders.

Vivienne's skilled touch eased Imogen's fear, who said with gratitude, "Vivienne, you're amazing."

Vivienne smiled, her gaze lingering on Imogen's glossy hair. "Your hair is really lovely."

Flattered, Imogen blushed and confessed, "Flynn takes care of it for me. I don't cut it much. After every wash, he applies conditioner and shows me how to blow-dry it properly. It works wonders."

As the mood lightened, Cecilia chuckled and said, "No wonder you cherish your hair so much. Isolde says you're always brushing it. It's taken care of so well that you don't lose much hair at all."

"Actually, I still do," Imogen confessed, stroking her hair, "but the frequent brushing makes it less noticeable." She then turned to Vivienne, concern returning to her features. "About that knife... It doesn't mean anything serious, does it? Could Percival have unknowingly crossed someone, and now we face retaliation?"

"Don't worry. It's just a prank," Vivienne reassured Imogen with a smile, then caught sight of a tattoo on her arm.

Imogen noticed Vivienne's interest and showed her arm generously. "The tattoo? I got it while abroad.

Flynn chose the design. Though the tiger is a bit intimidating, I thought it looked cool, so I went for it."

Vivienne studied the tattoo closely.

The design was identical to the one she had seen on Calista.

After calming Imogen down, Percival and Vivienne left the Ellington Mansion.

Entering the villa, Percival and Vivienne turned on the lights.

Dorian and Cordelia were not home yet, and Thaddeus was at school attending an event, leaving the house empty.

They entered Vivienne's bedroom and stood by the bed.

Percival sighed. "Such a great bed, what a waste."

Vivienne flicked on her flashlight and stepped in first, quipping, "If you fancy it, you can have my bed."

Percival rolled his eyes. "I wasn't talking about the bed! It's about this perfect timing!"

Vivienne played coy. "Oh? I don't follow!"

From outside, Leopold groaned. "Can you two stop flirting? I'm out here getting eaten alive by mosquitoes on watch duty!" New chapter available on [Dramanovels.com](http://Dramanovels.com)

Percival followed Vivienne down the dark staircase until they reached level ground.



"Lights," Vivienne commanded, and the once-dark room was instantly flooded with brightness.

Percival shielded his eyes momentarily, then gazed around, taking in the scene. "Vivienne, you never cease to amaze me."

The secret lair was compact but fully equipped, boasting a fridge, TV, toaster oven, microwave, and even smart home controls.

But the most out-of-place sight was Belle, who was tied to a chair, shackled with chains.

No one would have guessed that Belle was imprisoned beneath Vivienne's bed!

Belle slowly opened her eyes; her lips cracked, her voice hoarse, and the scars on her face made a gruesome sight.

"Just kill me, Vivienne," she croaked. "I won't tell you anything."

Chapter 487

Vivienne was cool as a cucumber as she scrolled through her phone, eventually pulling up a photo and passing the device to Belle.

"Is this the mark of White Tiger?" She asked, her voice steady and casual.

Belle snorted with a smirk. "So what if it is? Even if you found the mark, you won't catch him."

Vivienne let out a dismissive laugh. "How can you talk such a big game without ever having seen the

guy?"

That caught Belle off guard. She did not expect Vivienne to know that White Tiger had chosen to not work with her but with the true boss of GTO, the elusive F-Poison.

In other words, White Tiger had not even considered her despite her being GTO's right-hand woman.

Vivienne gulped down her coke a little too fast and burped without a hint of embarrassment, which made Percival chuckle softly as he patted her back gently.

"Easy there, no one's fighting you for it."

Vivienne flashed him a coy smile and a look that said more than words could.

Across from them, Belle cursed under her breath, "You two really have no shame."

Unfazed, Vivienne leaned against Percival's shoulder. "So, spill it—where's your mother?"

Belle's eyes widened in shock as if she had heard something unspeakable. It took her a moment to gather herself.

Indeed, Vivienne was asking about her mother!

After a pause, Belle finally found her voice. "What nonsense are you spouting now?"

Percival pulled out a document. "This was found in the GTO lab. It confirms that you and your boss are mother and daughter."

Belle was taken aback. Vivienne had managed to dig up something no one in GTO knew—their connection.

The document was a blood analysis report with her name and F-Poison's, indicating a maternal link.

Vivienne took the paper. "Oh, not biological? So, F-Poison adopted you, and you've been working for her out of gratitude."

Belle spat with disdain. "What do you know? You'll never understand the kindness my mother has shown me. Don't stand there acting all high and mighty. You think I'd tell you where she is? In your wildest dreams?"

Vivienne's eyes darkened. "So, for all that kindness your mother showed you, you killed my mother!"

In a flash, Vivienne lunged across the room and grabbed Belle by the throat with a grip that could snap it in an instant.

In Calista's lab, Vivienne had found more than proof that Belle was F-Poison's adopted daughter; she had uncovered a phone.

The last call made from that phone was to her mother on the very day she died.

Only Belle's fingerprints were on it, preserved in an evidence bag stored in the GTO lab.

After a decade, the device still held a charge—a testament to the technology her mother had tinkered

with. Even the devices GTO used were from her mother.

They had a real penchant for imitation.

Belle struggled to breathe under Vivienne's vice-like grip, her face turning red.

"It wasn't... me... I never... never even met... Karen!"

Percival stepped forward, placing a hand on Vivienne's shoulder. "Vivienne, she was only fifteen ten

years ago. It wasn't her."

Vivienne hesitated, then reluctantly let go.

Indeed, at twenty-five, Belle posed no threat, much less at fifteen. But Vivienne knew the last call to her

mother came from that phone—if not Belle, then it had to be F-Poison.

Except the phone bore no prints but Belle's.

One possibility remained.

F-Poison and Belle shared a fingerprint!

Just as Calista had once used her print, F-Poison had been hiding behind her adopted daughter's identity.

Many of Belle's alleged crimes could have been F-Poison's doing—GTO's true mastermind.

Vivienne composed herself and sat back down. "Belle, you will be interrogated for the next three days.

Better come clean about all your sins. If not, well, they'll make sure you suffer worse than death."

No sooner had Vivienne finished than two figures emerged from the shadows—Rowan and Ismene.

Belle glared at them. "Traitors! Don't you fear F-Poison will find you and tear you to shreds?"

Ismene rolled up her sleeves, brandishing a syringe. "Tear us to shreds? How about I feed you to the dogs first?"

With that, she jabbed the needle into Belle's neck, emptying the contents as Belle's body convulsed, then stiffened until only her mouth could move.

Rowan grinned, turning to Vivienne with respect. "Young Master, we'll take it from here. We'll make sure Mr. B... Belle tells nothing but the truth."

Vivienne nodded, aware of GTO's reputation for coercive interrogation.

Belle could never have imagined that one day, her former subordinates would use those same methods on her.

Vivienne and Percival left the basement.

Crawling out from under a bed, Percival suddenly remembered something and looked at Vivienne.

"Young Master?"

Had Rowan just addressed Vivienne as the Young Master? Since when was Vivienne the Young Master? And of what exactly?

Vivienne paused, then asked, "Mr. Wolf, you didn't know?"

"Should I?" Percival retorted with a hint of sarcasm.

Vivienne's lips twitched in mild annoyance. "Hasn't anyone told you I'm the Young Master of the Nine Mystics Society?"

Percival was speechless.

That was news to him.

Rubbing her temples, Vivienne sighed, "I thought you knew."

It was not that she did not want to tell Mr. Wolf about her status within the Nine Mystics Society. She genuinely believed he was aware.

After all, she had sent Draven on countless missions, especially entrusting Rowan and Ismene to his care.

Mr. Wolf never asked, so she assumed he knew.

Percival cleared his throat. "Madam, can I rely on you in the future?"

Vivienne laughed. "You better! I've got your back!"

Percival grinned. "Great, looks like I'm living the high life from now on."

It seemed that being a kept man was not too shabby! Updated at [Dramanovels.com](http://Dramanovels.com)

He did not mind it at all!

As they were bantering, the sounds of Dorian's family entering the house filled the air.

"Thaddeus, did you have fun today?" It was Cordelia's voice.

Thaddeus sighed. "It was okay, but I was a bit sad because Mom and Dad weren't there. All the other kids had someone, and I was by myself."

Dorian sat beside Thaddeus, saying, "Thaddeus, they are busy too. Try not to bother them, okay?"

Sometimes they're so busy they..."

Before he could finish, the door to Vivienne's bedroom swung open, and there stood Vivienne and

Percival, side by side at the threshold.

Chapter 488

In the dead of night, with the lights off and still in the bedroom!

"Damn it, Percival! What have you done to my daughter? She's still a minor!"

Percival looked into Dorian's fuming eyes with a hint of resignation, "We were just talking."

"Talking? Why in the dark? Were you two kissing like Isolde said, right here in the room?" Thaddeus

giggled behind his hand.

Isolde had spilled everything to Thaddeus, including when she overheard Vivienne and Percival kissing

in the bedroom!

Dorian's eyes seemed to bulge even more.

Cordelia's cheeks flushed as she pulled Thaddeus away. "Thaddeus, stop making things up. Vivienne

and Percival were just... doing homework. Yeah, that's it. Now you better finish yours."

Thaddeus snickered and scampered off to his room with his backpack.



Percival deliberately avoided Dorian's gaze and cleared his throat, "Mom, Dad, I should head out."

With that, Percival made a beeline for the door.

The more he thought about Thaddeus's words, the guiltier he felt!

Where the heck was Leopold when he was supposed to be on the lookout?

Leopold and Anna were indeed on duty, standing guard with due diligence.

When Percival emerged from the house, Leopold dropped his guard and approached. "All sorted out,

Percival?"

Percival responded with a swift kick to Leopold's rear. "Didn't you see someone go upstairs?"

Anna and Leopold looked baffled, nodding in unison.

"We saw, we even texted you."

Especially Leopold, rubbing his backside with a woebegone expression. He had sent Percival the

message the moment he saw Dorian's family within thirty feet!

Percival glanced at his phone, and sure enough, there was a message, which he had missed while with

Vivienne.

Clearing his throat, Percival pointed at Anna and said, "Continue the mission."

Then he turned to Leopold. "You're driving me home."

Leopold caught on, "Oh, got it. You're in trouble with your father-in-law because you did something to Vivienne, right?"

Percival just gave him a look. "After you drop me off, do five hundred push-ups and six hundred sit-ups outside Griffin's house. Don't even think about rejoining the squad until you're done!"

Leopold's face was the picture of shock. Push-ups and sit-ups were one thing, but why outside Griffin's house?

As they were about to split up, their communicators pinged simultaneously.

It was a direct mission from HQ to the Vanguard Agency's special squad, demanding immediate readiness.

[White Tiger sighting in Weststart City. Wolf leads the team. Depart immediately!]

The playful expressions vanished from their faces. Anna wanted to speak, but Percival cut her off. "You stick with Vivienne!"

Anna saluted crisply, "Yes, sir!"

Percival and Leopold set out at once.

Percival's brow furrowed deeply, his expression grim.

Why was White Tiger in Weststart City, a place known for its abandoned coal mines, far from urban planning?

Anna returned home and relayed the sudden mission details to Vivienne, "It was all very abrupt; I don't know the specifics. But Ms. Vivienne, something doesn't feel right."

Vivienne nodded in agreement. "I agree."

Setting aside the puzzling appearance of White Tiger in Weststart City, the mission itself was riddled with irregularities.

Usually, the Vanguard Agency would arrange all the details before a mission, including the command structure, snipers, and such. They would disseminate maps to squad leaders and decide on roles and strategies.

Even in emergencies, team leaders would have a heads-up to plan within half an hour before announcing the action.

After all, Vanguard Agency's missions were life and death; they could not afford to act rashly for the

sake of the safety of their members.

The Vanguard Agency had been tracking CK and White Tiger as its head honcho, a five-star wanted criminal.

To capture such a high-profile target with no preparation?

Vivienne furrowed her brow, "Anna, let's go see Griffin."

Anna asked no questions. She donned her coat, checked her sidearm, and left with Vivienne.

At Vanguard Agency HQ, Percival and his team geared up in combat attire and boarded the transport to Weststart City. Only en route did the team receive a brief terrain map, lacking detailed danger zones.

"Satellite imagery hasn't come through yet. Familiarize yourself with the basic layout," Percival commanded from the lead vehicle.

The HQ would be commanding this operation through satellite. Micah would be in the field, in charge of the vehicles, while Percival would lead the team.

Leopold's squad was on point, scouting the terrain. Thomas's second squad covered the perimeter, and Soren joined Percival to head straight for the heart of enemy territory.

Soren was already throwing a fit in the car, and it was not because they were heading deep into enemy territory—it was because Percival was with him.

"Captain, you're the commander, the head honcho. You shouldn't be on the front lines!"

Percival was the squad leader, the one supposed to stay back and oversee the safety of all the team members, commanding from the rear.

Having the squad leader, and to top it off, the deputy director, waltz into the lion's den was unheard of.

Their headsets were linked to the command vehicle on-site, and Micah heard everything loud and clear.

Soren did not care if he heard it all; the whole situation was out of order, a clear sign that someone had it out for Percival!

And the only person Percival had managed to tick off lately was Micah.

Through the headset, Micah's voice was steady as he said, "Will you quit your yapping?"

"I'll yap as much as I need to!" Soren fumed, ripping off his headset.

Percival shot him a glare that could kill. "Put it back on!"

Soren huffed and puffed but reluctantly put the headset back on, sulking in his seat.

"Understood!" Soren barked back.

Percival nudged him with his foot, "Do you understand?"

"Understood!" Soren shouted, dropping the whole downtrodden act.

Leopold and Thomas stepped out last, following Percival, with Soren trailing behind.

"We still haven't got the satellite images; what good is a basic map?" Leopold grumbled, though he had more restraint than Soren.

But now that they had reached their target, the lack of satellite intel could tie their hands during the mission, a frustration anyone would find unbearable. Content of Drąmanovels.com

Percival slung his arm around Leopold's shoulder and crooked his other arm around Soren. Thomas, catching on quickly, leaned in, too.

The four huddled up.

Percival used the tip of his boot to scratch a few letters in the dirt.

When put together, it meant they were to pull out immediately if they heard the word "run" over the headset.

These letters were like Vanguard Agency's own Morse code, a shorthand used internally.

The other three nodded in understanding, recognizing that Percival also felt something was off about this mission.

They wiped the letters away with their feet and headed to their respective mission points.

Micah's voice came through the headset, "What are you guys up to?"

Percival tapped his headset and chuckled, "Just a bit of ritual for good luck, you know, a little pre-mission mojo."

#### Chapter 489

With a creased map in hand, Percival trekked alongside Soren to a nearby abandoned mine.

At the mine's entrance, they stumbled upon a covert mark of White Tiger etched into the rock face, its meaning unclear yet undeniably significant. And there, scattered nearby, lay a cache of critical documents belonging to CK.

"Base, this is Soren. We've found the mark," Soren hollered into his headset.

A different voice crackled back, not Micah's as expected, but that of the HQ commander. "Copy that. Proceed underground."

Exchanging a glance, Percival and Soren strapped on their oxygen masks and descended into the

bowels of the earth.

Markers bearing White Tiger's emblem appeared sporadically along the mine's tunnels—faded, but a trail they could follow nonetheless.

As they ventured deeper, the air grew thin, and a faint, metallic scent of blood wafted from the depths.

Suddenly, a clod of earth tumbled from directly above Percival.

"Run!" Percival barked, his eyes dark with urgency.

With lightning reflexes, Soren signaled to the team behind them, and the third squad retreated in a disciplined dash toward the exit.

Then, a thunderous collapse echoed from behind Soren.

"Captain!" He yelled.

"Get out of here. That's an order!" Percival's voice crackled through the headset as Soren could only

glimpse his silhouette through the narrowing gaps in the debris.

"Captain, I'll get you out!" Soren halted along with a few others.

Percival's voice was icy. "Get lost. After you're out, find Vivienne!"



Leopold and Thomas, sensing the gravity of the situation, called out, "Captain, report your status!"

"Mine... Collapse... Get out..."

Percival's voice faded into static.

Ignoring the danger, Leopold and Thomas led their teams back toward Percival's last known location.

However, before they could get close, a helicopter buzzed overhead, raining down bullets like a

hailstorm.

Leopold and Thomas fought back while retreating to HQ. But unfamiliar with the terrain, the front squad

often stumbled into collapsing tunnels, with some members falling into the abyss.

Regrouping with Thomas, Leopold boosted their firepower and rescued the wounded.

Back at HQ, Micah shouted into the mic, "Wolf, unidentified forces are attacking from above. Evacuate

now!"

In the mine, Percival tossed aside his useless headset, shouting to Soren, "Comms are jammed.

There's a signal blocker somewhere. Go support Husky."

Hearing the battle above, Soren knew staying meant certain death for all.

The only chance was to escape and return with reinforcements for Percival.

Tears streaming, Soren vowed, "Captain, wait for my return."

They narrowly escaped the mine, though not without injuries—broken limbs and, for Soren, a gashed head.

Once outside, his headset crackled back to life with Micah's voice urging Wolf to pull back.

Gritting his teeth, Soren radioed, "HQ, Wolf's comms are down. Send me the coordinates of the hostile fire. Now!"

There was no time to consider the consequences. They had to down the helicopters to cut off the attack and minimize casualties.

Micah cursed and relayed the information.

The three squads swiftly ended the fight, downing two helicopters, while the third vanished.

Regrouped at the rendezvous point, with casualties among them, they awaited further orders.

Soren, his head hastily bandaged, relayed Percival's location to Leopold, insisting they had to go back.

"Damn it!" Leopold took two rifles from the other members and strapped them on, his voice a mix of anger and resolve. "First squad, anyone who can still move, on me."

Thomas echoed the sentiment. "Second squad, with me."

As Soren turned to follow, dizziness from blood loss nearly overcame him.

Thomas caught him. "Go back to report and heal. Or the captain will have your hide."

Micah, limping with a cane, stormed over, nearly collapsing. "Everyone, back to base now!"

"But our captain is still in there!" Leopold roared, defiance written across his face.

Percival was not only his captain but his dear friend who grew up with him. There was no way he would let Percival be buried down there without doing anything.

Micah knew the stakes but stood firm. "Look at your men. They're heavily wounded, and their lives matter, too. Back to base, that's an order!"

He shoved Leopold aside and took Soren from Thomas. "Get him treated, then document everything about the mine. Hand it to me."

The radio operator approached with urgent news. "Deputy director, it's the HQ commander."

Micah grabbed the handset. "This is Micah."

"Who authorized this operation? I told you to wait for satellite confirmation before proceeding. Do you not understand 'stand by'?"

Soren overheard the loud exchange.

"We followed orders from HQ to enter the mine. When were we told to stand by?" Soren interjected.

After a pause, an enraged voice came from the other side, "Bullshit! I've been shouting my throat dry, ordering an evacuation!"

Realization struck Micah. "Check the comms for viruses, now!"

The commander at HQ quickly realized it, too, and yelled for his men to check the system.

As expected, both HQ and the field team discovered their systems had been infected with malware.

"Damn it!" Micah kicked the truck in frustration. This was the first time HQ had been so thoroughly played.

White Tiger sure knew how to stir the pot.

"Got it," Leopold nodded, fishing his phone out of his pocket and dialing Vivienne's number.

Vivienne picked up almost immediately, her first words sharp and to the point, "Send me your location."

Leopold blinked, "Vivienne, where are you?"

Leopold was stunned. Vivienne had known trouble was brewing even before being notified and was

already on her way!

“Okay,” Leopold said, glancing at Micah but deciding against reporting in. He texted their location to Vivienne.

To hell with the consequences - Percival's life was at stake! New chapter available on [Dramanovels.com](http://Dramanovels.com)

True to her word, five minutes later, Vivienne's car pulled up not far from the command vehicle.

Anna and Griffin stepped out with her, lugging a heavy-looking case between them.

Micah paused for a moment upon seeing Vivienne, then quickly snapped to, shooting a warning glare at Leopold, who was about to step forward in greeting.

Leopold pretended not to notice the warning and met her with a composed stride.

“Vivienne, Percival's trapped under the mine. We just can't get a read on the situation inside,” he said, briefly outlining the dilemma.

Vivienne frowned slightly – she had suspected as much about the mine.

Before Leopold could respond, Micah jabbed him in the shin with his cane, blocking him.

“Vivienne, are you sure you can safely extract Percival?”

Just then, a voice crackled over the radio, "Micah, no unauthorized personnel are allowed to interfere with the operation. That's the rule!"

#### Chapter 490

Vivienne's icy gaze locked onto Micah across the room, her eyes sharp and piercing with an almost palpable intensity.

Micah remained silent for a few heartbeats before switching off the intercom.

The voice that had been calling his name fell abruptly silent.

"I need to know," Micah's voice cut through the tension. "Do you have a solid plan to extract Percival safely?"

In that instant, an almost spectral aura of authority emanated from Micah, a remnant of the times he had battled through the most harrowing situations.

Thomas and Leopold, standing nearby, were momentarily taken aback.

Micah had been their drill instructor back in the day. Since becoming the deputy director, the formidable

presence he once commanded seemed to have diminished.

They had all assumed that Micah was past his prime, a paper pusher with graying hair.

But they were wrong. He had merely cloaked his ferocity beneath a guise of geniality, letting the years mellow his exterior.

Vivienne's gaze never wavered from Micah, shadows flickering in her eyes as she spoke with a gravity that brooked no argument, "Percival is the love of my life."

That single declaration held more weight than any promise could.

"He's the love of my life. How could I possibly leave him to face danger alone?"

Hearing Vivienne's resolute and unequivocal statement, Micah turned to issue orders, "Leopold, take

Vivienne to the coordinates. Thomas, get to Soren immediately and have him report the mine's internal status!"

"No need," Vivienne interjected, pulling up a satellite map on her tablet. It showed the interior of the mine with a faint red dot marking Percival's location.

Hovering near Vivienne, Thomas voiced his concern, "Ma'am, the air is thin inside the mine. We don't know how much oxygen the captain has left, and we can't reach him."

Vivienne understood the urgency. "Does he have his headset?"

"He does, but we've lost contact. It seems a signal jammer is at play inside. No telling how long he can hold out," Leopold added quickly.

"As long as he has it," Vivienne said, retrieving a device resembling a Bluetooth speaker from Griffin's gearbox and connecting it to a laptop screen.

As soon as she activated it, all the headsets of the Vanguard Agency agents in the vicinity lost their signals.

Even the command vehicle where Micah sat was suddenly bereft of any communication.

"What's going on? Another virus?" Micah asked, bewildered.

"No." Vivienne typed in a sequence of codes, and a prompt appeared on the laptop screen. "Leopold, what's Mr. Wolf's public channel code?"

"0001."

Vivienne entered the code, and a faint sound of breathing immediately came through the speaker.

Everyone was startled, and Micah looked at Vivienne incredulously, at a loss for what had happened.

Vivienne put on a headset and said, "Mr. Wolf, can you hear me?"

After a brief pause, a voice came through, "Vivienne?"



"Holy smokes, it's Percival!" Leopold exclaimed, "Vivienne, you're a miracle worker!"

Micah, too, grasped the principle behind Vivienne's communication with Percival.

She had redirected all communication signals to focus solely on her and Percival's devices, turning the

Bluetooth speaker into a targeted signal transmitter.

By inputting Percival's code, she could funnel all communication directly to the disconnected headset.

Micah's look of admiration towards Vivienne deepened.

"Mr. Wolf, give me your exact position and surroundings. I need precise details," Vivienne demanded,

staring at the satellite feed on her laptop, which was not entirely accurate. She could only devise an

effective rescue plan with absolute certainty of Percival's whereabouts.

Percival reported from his location, "I'm in a temporary shelter within the mine. There's some air left

here, and I found a cave for cover, but I'm not sure how long it will hold. I've got thirty percent oxygen

left in the tank."

Vivienne pinpointed his location based on the coordinates he provided.

He was about 0.6 miles from the mine's entrance, which was hardly an ideal spot. The thinness of the

air was unimaginable.

The extent of the collapse between his location and the entrance was unknown—they would have to blast through bit by bit to reach him safely.

If they were to blast directly above Percival's position, it could easily trigger a secondary collapse, endangering his life.

Vivienne's brow furrowed with concern. "Mr. Wolf, can you hold out for two days?"

To ensure a safe extraction, she had to aim to keep the rescue operation within a two-day window.

Percival's voice came through with a chuckle. "If you're waiting for me outside, I can hold out for twenty days."

How could he possibly succumb to the mine's depth when he had not yet married his beloved

Vivienne?

Leopold could hardly contain himself, shouting at the speaker, "Conserve your strength, Percival. We're coming to get you."

"Okay."

Vivienne's tone was stern, "Mr. Wolf, don't speak unless it's absolutely necessary."

"Just one more thing," Percival said, his voice muffled by movement, then settling back into stillness,

"Vivienne, I love you."

Vivienne bit her lower lip, feeling a surge of emotion as she replied firmly into the headset, "Percival, I

love you too."

The Vanguard Agency's special squad quickly set charges at the mine entrance.

To safely carve a passage, they must blast through the debris blocking the entrance.

But this was a gamble.

Detonating explosives in an already unstable mine was akin to dancing with death.

These were Griffin's latest creations, more compact and potent than traditional explosives, resembling

grenades but packing a punch far beyond the standard issue.

What set them apart was their precision. Carefully calculated placement allowed control over the blast

radius, which was essential for this delicate operation.

They were like a deck of cards—sometimes, a handful could make a minimal impact, and other times,

the same number could bring down the house.

It all came down to how you played your hand.

The prototype was still in the early stages of development, untested in real-world conditions, and Griffin was anything but certain. "Vivienne," she cautioned, "the 'Morning Glory' is still untested. This is its first detonation."

"Morning Glory" was the moniker Griffin had affectionately bestowed upon the explosive device.

Vivienne studied the intricately calculated layout, not a flicker of doubt in her gaze. "Detonate," she commanded.

To hesitate even for a second meant risking Percival's life for another. Once her mind was made up, Vivienne would not waver.

Griffin exchanged a glance with Leopold, whose heart was in his throat, but if Vivienne believed it was possible, that was enough for him.

Leopold gave a firm nod, placing all his faith in the "Morning Glory."

With that, Griffin pressed the detonator.

A rapid succession of ten explosions ripped through the air, kicking up a billowing cloud of dust that soared skyward like fireworks before cascading down like a hail of bullets.

Everyone shielded their faces with their arms, and when the dust finally settled, Leopold peered into the mouth of the mine to assess the damage.

Thomas and his comrades held their breath in anticipation.

Then came Leopold's triumphant voice, "Vivienne, we've got a hole five feet wide and thirty feet deep!"

A wave of relief swept over the crowd.

The entrance to the mine was a delicate matter. Using heavy machinery like excavators could have easily triggered a collapse, particularly in Weststart City, which was already scarred by extensive mining. The risk of a ground collapse was just too great.

But with the "Morning Glory," they could ensure the stability of the mine's interior and break through the

blocked entrance, saving precious time in the process.

Thomas, shovel in hand, rallied the troops. "Follow my lead."

Armed with their entrenching tools, the Vanguard Agency's special squad began to clear the rubble at the entrance.

Leopold led another team to haul away the debris.

Vivienne and Griffin were already crunching numbers for the subsequent detonation.

Micah watched from a distance. His brow's features crinkled in a mixture of concern and pride.

"Karen," he muttered to himself, "your daughter is quite remarkable."

He made his way to the command vehicle, leaning on his cane, and dialed Rivenwood's headquarters

to ensure the logistic support was in place.

Two days of non-stop rescue operations would wear anybody out. Only with a solid supply chain could

they keep the rescue efforts running smoothly.

"You have a call from headquarters," one of the communication officers said, holding out Micah's

relentlessly buzzing phone.

Micah glanced at it and said, "Turn it off."

"Yes, sir!"

Meanwhile, the Ellington family was in turmoil.

With Percival missing and no word from Vivienne or Thomas, the entire family was on the brink of

chaos.

"Flynn, you don't think something's happened to Percival, do you? We just received those threatening letters with knives, and now we can't reach either of them. What are we going to do?" Imogen said, visibly shaken.

Flynn's expression was grim. "No, Percival must be tied up with his own matters."

But despite his reassuring words, Flynn was also anxious himself.

The real issue was that Percival was slated to debut as the Ellington family's heir the next day, facing shareholders and the media.

It was a critical event, one that demanded Percival's presence. With no idea of his whereabouts, what were they to do?

Seated on the sofa, Richard broke the silence. "Flynn, you'll stand in as acting chairman. We must minimize the fallout and quell the speculation about Percival and Vivienne's absence. If need be, tell the world they're abroad on vacation."

Flynn bit his lip in hesitation. "Dad, are you sure that's appropriate? Tomorrow's announcement is crucial. If I take the stage..."

"It's better than having no one," Richard cut in. "You'll do it. When Percival returns, he can handle the

rest. End of discussion."

Imogen looked worriedly at Richard. "Richard, I'm concerned Percival might take this wrong."

"He won't. He's not that petty. Flynn, make sure you're prepared for it." Richard took a deep breath, stood up, and returned to his room with his cane.

Imogen was still unconvinced. "Flynn, this feels like we're taking advantage of Percival's absence. I'm not sure if it's right."

Flynn was torn, unsure whether to accept.

Bolstered by Nathan and Cecilia's words, Flynn made up his mind. "Alright, I got it."

Meanwhile, Percival was still trapped in the depths of the mine, conserving his dwindling oxygen supply, which hovered around fifteen percent.

He clung to Vivienne's voice in his earpiece, staring at his phone screen.

It was a screenshot from one of Vivienne's live streams, captured by countless viewers but saved by him alone.

His fingertips grazed her image on the screen repeatedly as if each touch fueled his resolve to hold on.



"Mr. Wolf, give me a sound," Vivienne checked in again for Percival's safety.

To save oxygen, Percival tapped his earpiece microphone lightly.

"I'm here, and I miss you," The Morse code meant.

Vivienne smiled softly. "Good. I miss you too. Just 0.4 miles to go."

The deeper they dug, the more cautious they had to be with the explosives. After all, the consequences of a cave-in were unpredictable, and precision was paramount.

Every calculation had to be spot-on and triple-checked before Vivienne dared to issue the command.

With Percival's life at stake, she could not afford to be reckless.

Thomas and Leopold were sprawled out on the ground, too exhausted even to stand straight. They watched Vivienne and Griffin run through their rapid-fire calculations with a touch of envy.

"It must be nice to be a brain worker," Leopold muttered, dousing his head with nearly an entire bottle of water.

Thomas caught his breath and added, "We can't even imagine the pressure they're under."

Leopold sat up and patted Thomas on the back, "That's true. No time for lying down. Let's get back to

it." Read at [Dramanovels.com](http://Dramanovels.com)

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Back at Ellington Group.

It was the day of the big press conference.

Flynn walked in, clad in a bespoke charcoal suit and gold-rimmed glasses, his demeanor the perfect blend of scholarly and commanding—a king among men.

Imogen, watching from a distance, felt a surge of joy.

After Flynn had coordinated all the details with his secretary, it was time for the announcement.

Ellington Group's shareholders and the press members were momentarily taken aback as Flynn made his entrance.

His expression was serene. His signature smile graced his face as he confidently approached the podium. "Good afternoon, I'm Flynn Ellington, the acting chairman of Ellington Group."

The media's cameras flashed like a thunderstorm, and Flynn's photographs quickly spread across the internet through various channels.

On the Financial News Network, the word "acting" was omitted, announcing Flynn as the new chairman

of Ellington Group attending the press conference!

The news of Flynn's ascension to chairman of Ellington Group was broadcast far and wide.

Flynn swiftly took control of all the company's channels and subsidiaries' finances.

But once home, he was the same man, deeply concerned about his missing nephew.

Upon entering the house, he immediately asked, "Any word on Percival?"

Flynn sank into the couch; his hands clasped, thumbs rubbing anxiously as if trying to spark a fire.

After a moment, he spoke, "Dad, I'm worried someone's targeting our family. First, Kenneth's near-fatal accident, then someone left a knife by my bed. We need to be on guard."

Richard nodded in agreement. "You're right. We can no longer afford to take these threats lightly."