

Million-Dollar 561

Chapter 561

Everyone gathered around Jasper, but he reached for Vivienne with a steady hand.

"Vivienne, you okay there?"

Vivienne shifted her gaze from Vesper and replied softly, "Yeah, a bit shaken up."

Jasper hummed in response, gently patting Vivienne's hand. "I'm gonna be fine. Gotta take you back

home to watch Natalia and Yasmine grow up and wait for Sasha to return. I won't break my promise."

Then, spotting Percival, he added with a smile, "And to see our Vivienne get married and have kids,

right?"

Vivienne blushed slightly. "How about I check in on you every month, say on the ninth?"

Although Vivienne still had questions about what was really going on inside Jasper, she knew now was

not the time to ask. He was weak and did not need the stress of an interrogation.

"Sounds good to me," Jasper chuckled, his eyes catching Vesper standing a little ways off. The more

he looked, the more he liked the young man. "Young sir, you do resemble my boys strikingly."

Vesper looked up, a complicated expression in his eyes, but he managed a small smile. "Really? Then

I suppose I'm quite the looker."

Jasper laughed heartily. "You sure are, lad, a spitting image of my younger self."

Yuri teased, "Dad, fishing for compliments now?"

"I've always been handsome." Jasper stood up, still holding Vivienne's hand. "Vivienne's kids are gonna be stunners, no doubt."

"Dad, how many kids do you want Vivienne to have?" Zelda asked.

Jasper thought momentarily, then said, "Hey, Percival, how many do you want?"

Caught off-guard by the sudden question, Percival cleared his throat and said, "That's up to Vivienne."

"You just stay out of the fray and take care of yourself. Can't have any repeats of last time," Jasper advised more seriously.

Percival nodded in agreement, feeling no discomfort.

Vivienne turned to Vesper. "How many kids do you have at the Linklater family??"

"Just one daughter and she's a handful," Vesper replied with a chuckle. "Mr. Ellington, you're going to have your hands full. Better take care of yourself, especially with four sons and three daughters in the cards."

Percival wrapped an arm around Vivienne's waist and said, "Alright, then we'll have seven."

Vivienne pinched Percival's side in response.

What was he even talking about?

Seven kids?

At this rate, they would have enough for a soccer team.

Jasper was all smiles. "Seven kids, eh? The more, the merrier. It's a handful for a father, though. You'd better prepare yourself."

As the banter continued, no one noticed that Vesper had silently disappeared from the foot of the bed.

When Vivienne realized what had happened, not only was Vesper gone, but Finnian had also vanished.

Vivienne made to go after them, but Percival stopped her. "Vivienne, let it be. We can't catch up."

Yuri joined them, nodding. "Mr. Linklater's skills are beyond us."

Despite everyone's attention on Jasper, all present were vigilant and trained. How could two grown men disappear without notice? The only explanation was that Vesper's skills surpassed them all.

Vivienne felt a premonition that she would see Vesper again, but it would be a long time coming.

She sent a message to mobilize the Nine Mystics Society and the Frostfire Intelligence Agency to find

Vesper, but she was unsure if they would succeed.

Still weak from his illness, Jasper soon fell asleep, and Vivienne and Percival left the Perez Mansion.

After their departure, Yuri entered the house and felt a gust of wind by his ear. The next second, a

disposable fork with a note attached was embedded in the door.

Yuri took the note. It read: [Watch those around you.]

He looked around but saw no one, not even the bodyguards, had noticed the danger.

Even Yuri would not have known about the silent intruder if he had not seen the fork himself.

The note seemed to be a warning, not a threat. But who could it be from? The same person who left a

note in Jasper's room last time?

Yuri pocketed the note without causing a stir. He did not want Zelda to worry.

After instructing the guards to increase their numbers around the house and to keep a close eye on

Vivienne without her noticing, Yuri left them to their posts.

...

A mile away from the Perez Mansion, at a corner diner.

Finnian took out another fork and sighed over his plate. "Missed a good meal back there. Heard helpers at the Perez family can really cook up a storm."

Vesper sipped his soup, saying, "This isn't half bad, either. Eat up."

"Aren't you going to say anything?" Finnian complained, burning his tongue on a hot mushroom.

Vesper casually picked out the shrimp from his soup. "The waters run deep in the Perez family."

Vesper did not need to say much. With just one phrase, Finnian knew precisely what he meant.

Meanwhile, Vivienne was lounging back in her chair, her mind racing through every detail of the day.

What did not add up...

Was it the two pairs of shoes Vesper brought or his silent departure?

Suddenly, Vivienne sat up straight. "Mr. Wolf, we never mentioned where Grandpa's bedroom was when Vesper and Finnian arrived, did we?"

His hands steady on the steering wheel, Percival glanced at her with a knowing look. "Indeed, we didn't."

How could Vesper, a newcomer to the Perez Mansion, navigate straight to Jasper's bedroom as if he knew the way? Content belongs to Dramanovels.com

Even Vivienne had to be led there by Zelda and Yuri, but he found it effortlessly.

And then there were those two pairs of perfectly prepared shoes.

Vivienne was certain; Vesper must have been secretly watching the Perez family's every move, which was why he seemed so familiar with everyone!

But what could his motives be?

"Don't you find him too familiar, though?" Vivienne's gaze was cloudy, her thoughts obviously revolving around Vesper.

Vivienne nodded, her mind still churning, returned Percival's kiss, and headed upstairs.

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Percival watched Vivienne disappear into the building before starting his car and driving away.

Along the drive, he dialed Thomas.

"Check out the Perez family. Don't miss a soul, not even a pet—especially those who've passed on or gone missing. No stone unturned," he instructed with a sense of urgency.

Thomas did not ask for details, simply acknowledging the order before hanging up.

Despite comforting Vivienne earlier, Percival could not shake his doubts. If it had anything to do with

the Perez family, Vivienne was inevitably entangled in the web.

After all, the person who tampered with Vivienne's paternity test was still at large.

...

The next day, Percival parked outside Vivienne's place before the crack of dawn, and she soon

emerged, surprisingly skipping her usual lie-in.

"Mom whipped up some fusion breakfast for you. Give it a go," Percival said, handing her a food

container as she climbed into the car. Inside was a twist on the classic: buttery English muffins stuffed

with fried eggs, accompanied by slices of tomato.

Vivienne took a bite, pleasantly surprised by the flavor.

"Did your mom make this?" she asked between bites.

Percival sighed. "Sort of. She cut the muffins herself, but Dad had to fry the eggs. Last time mom tried,

she turned the eggs into charcoal."

Vivienne could picture it all too well; after all, she had her own culinary disasters. Her mother had to

ban her from the kitchen before she finally gave up.

They arrived at the Perez Mansion to the sound of crying—but it was not Natalia or Yasmine, nor was it

Zelda.

Walking in, the sight of a flashy sports car in the driveway gave it all away.

Maddox was here, along with a woman, judging by the weeping. Maddox was not the one crying, that was for sure.

Zelda was outside, perfecting her strawberry cake recipe, finally mastering the art of separating whites from yolks. She halted Vivienne at the door.

"What's going on?" Vivienne inquired.

"Wait out here a sec. It's quite the scene inside. Been crying since sunrise," Zelda said, evidently annoyed by the commotion.

Zelda was usually easygoing, never showing disdain or giving anyone the cold shoulder. Whoever was causing such a reaction must have been quite the handful.

Respecting Zelda's hint, Vivienne sat in the yard, watching as Zelda continued her battle or rather, her study of cream ratios.

Soon, a familiar voice called from the gate.

"Is that my darling niece? I saw your car! I've been waiting!"

Zelda looked up, "Your Uncle Maddox's here. He's been hollering about seeing you. I told him you'd be by today, and that's the only thing that calmed him down. Man, he's annoying."

Though Zelda spoke with a hint of exasperation, her smile starkly contrasted with the sobbing inside.

Maddox approached Vivienne with a bouquet and an assortment of pastries, saying, "Long time no see. Missed your uncle?"

"Sure have," Vivienne replied with a smile, reaching for the flowers only to have Percival intercept them.

No way he was going to let Vivienne accept another man's flowers, family or not.

Maddox looked on with approval. "Ah, you've got my spirit! A jealous man is a good man!"

Yuri, who could not take any more, said, "Maddox, that's enough. Go inside and make yourself useful before folks think there's a real tragedy in our family."

Zelda nodded. "Yeah, Maddox, cut the act and help out."

Maddox sighed. "Zelda, that cake will never get done at this rate!"

Zelda nearly splattered the not-quite-right cream all over Maddox in frustration.

Luckily for him, he was quick on his feet.

Vivienne could not help but laugh. Maddox was nothing like a typical older brother.

Within a minute of Maddox entering the house, the crying stopped, and out he came with a woman pushing Jasper in his wheelchair, a smile blooming on Jasper's face at the sight of Vivienne. "Vivienne, come here. I want you to meet someone."

As Vivienne approached, Jasper introduced the woman behind him, "This is Diana Perez, my goddaughter, a few years younger than Sasha. Diana, meet Vivienne."

Diana stepped forward and embraced Vivienne warmly. "Vivienne, I'm Auntie Diana. I wanted to visit you in Sea City, but Maddox said you were busy. I'm glad I finally met you."

Vivienne bristled at the sudden intimacy from a stranger, but in Jasper's presence, she held her tongue.

"Nice to meet you, Auntie Diana," she greeted, noting Diana's red eyes from crying.

Maddox pulled Vivienne aside and said, "Diana, you were six when Sasha was around. Do you really remember her that well?"

Jasper lightly tapped Maddox with his cane. "Stop bullying your sister."

Maddox did not respond but handed Vivienne back to Percival, adding, "Take care of your woman. You can't let just anyone touch her."

Diana's cheeks flushed with embarrassment. Maddox's words were too specific.

Percival stepped in with a chuckle, protecting Vivienne close to his side.

Jasper rolled his eyes at Maddox, fully aware of his sons' less-than-warm attitudes towards Diana. New chapter available on Dramanovels.com

Despite the years, they never seemed to change, and no amount of talking did any good.

He could not quite put his finger on what Maddox did not like about Diana.

"Vivienne, I've brought you a little something," Maddox said as he reached into his car and pulled out a gift box, handing it over to Vivienne.

Inside was a jeweled hairpin, exquisitely crafted, with clearly top-notch stones.

A knowing smile spread across Vivienne's face. "I love it."

She lifted the hairpin, feeling its weight, and upon closer inspection, she discovered a hidden blade!

"Keep it with you. These vintage styles are making a comeback, and you'll look stunning with this,"

Maddox said with a grin.

Yuri had briefed Maddox about the mysterious note and Vesper. This gift to Vivienne was more than just an accessory; it was a means of self-defense.

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Next to Jasper, Diana bit her lower lip in frustration.

Was Maddox being too obvious?

It was as if he were broadcasting to the world that he disliked her!

It was outrageous, completely outrageous!

Diana took several deep breaths to compose herself and turned to Vivienne with a smile. "Vivienne, I rushed over here and didn't have time to pick up a gift for you. How about we hit the shops later, and anything you fancy, it's on me."

"No, that's alright, I don't need anything," Vivienne replied, eager to keep her distance.

For some reason, Vivienne always felt uneasy around Diana. It was not just because Diana was adopted into the Perez family; there was something off-putting about her.

Maybe it was what people called 'bad vibes.'

Diana moved closer, eagerly grabbing Vivienne's hand again. "Vivienne, don't be like that with me.

Even if you've got everything, one more thing won't hurt. Us girls can never have too many treats, right, Zelda?"

Zelda looked up from her book and said, "Absolutely, I'll tag along. I always believe in the more the merrier when it comes to my closet."

Yuri coughed, glancing at the pile of unopened shopping bags near Zelda.

Yeah, the more the merrier.

Diana forced a laugh, but with Zelda jumping in, she could not very well refuse. "Alright, let's go together."

While she appeared enthusiastic, Diana was fuming inside.

What was Zelda up to?

Was she worried about Vivienne going out alone with her?

Ha! The nerve, thinking she was a true Perez through and through!

Seeing Zelda on board, Vivienne had no more excuses to decline.

Percival, jingling his car keys, chimed in, "I'd be honored to chauffeur three lovely ladies today."

"Thanks a bunch," Diana responded with a smile.

After Vivienne finished checking Jasper's health, the group set off for a shopping spree.

Standing in the yard, Maddox turned off the grill, "Yuri, keep an eye on your wife. She's got a knack for turning our home into a disaster zone."

"We'll just buy a new one if that happens," Yuri muttered, shutting off the whipped cream maker.

Jasper addressed his sons, "You two, give Diana a break. She was quite embarrassed earlier. As her brothers, try not to be so hard on her."

Maddox scratched his ear. "Dad, speaking of Diana, there's something you need to know."

"Go on."

"She's been snooping around your will, and there was some tampering with Willa's paternity test. Diana was the only one who had contact with Willa then, and I suspect she's behind it. We just lack the proof."

Jasper leaned forward, a look of shock crossing his face. But what stunned him was not Diana's meddling with the will or the test; it was that the paternity test results could be fake!

Jasper, clearly agitated, began to cough, and Yuri quickly stepped forward to comfort him. "Dad, don't

get worked up. Maddox said we don't have proof against Diana yet. We're still investigating."

Jasper took Yuri's hand, steadying himself. "Do you boys mean to say that Vivienne might actually be my biological granddaughter?"

Maddox knelt, looking up at his father earnestly. "Yes. Ever since I first laid eyes on Vivienne, I felt she had to be my niece. Dad, you're not the only one who has that hunch, which is why I doubt the paternity test."

Yuri nodded. "Right, Dad. Should we redo the test?"

After a moment, Jasper decided. "Do it again, but keep it under wraps. No one at home should know, not even Zelda. Handle it discreetly in Rivenwood."

Since there was a mole at home, they would keep it a secret from everyone in their family.

Yuri agreed. "Alright, I'm on it."

While Yuri went to deal with the test, Maddox stayed with Jasper, unable to shake his concern.

They had grown up with Diana, and though they were not particularly fond of their sister, they knew her all too well, especially her capabilities.

Maddox felt certain someone was backing Diana.

Soon, Yuri returned from the lab with the rushed paternity test results.

But when they came in, the news was disappointing.

“Dad, it’s the same result,” Yuri handed the report to Jasper, a trace of regret in his eyes.

Maddox was shocked. “Impossible, Diana clearly tampered with it...”

“Maddox, I personally supervised the entire process in the lab, from sample collection to result delivery.

No one interfered,” Yuri insisted.

Jasper visibly deflated but then took a deep breath.

“Let it go. If she’s not, then we shouldn’t force it.” Jasper wheeled himself away. “You two go have fun. I need some rest.”

Both Yuri and Maddox knew Jasper’s heart was once again shattered.

“Are you sure you got to the bottom of this, Maddox? Did Diana really tamper with the test?” Yuri could not help but question Maddox.

Maddox smacked Yuri’s head. “When have I ever been wrong? There’s definitely something not right here.”

Yuri stopped arguing and followed his brother. While it was disappointing not to have Vivienne as their niece, Yuri had already come to regard her as family.

The paternity test did not change how the Perez family would treat Vivienne with genuine care and affection.

Maddox burned the paternity test report that negated their blood relation, his gaze intense.

He refused to believe it.

Vivienne had to be his real niece.

Sasha had always been the apple of her brother Maddox's eye, so when Vivienne showed up out of the blue, he was convinced she simply had to be his missing sister's child.

But something was not adding up. Why did every paternity test come back negative?

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At the mall, Vivienne browsed with ease, picking up anything that caught her fancy. Diana was there to make an impression, so naturally, she stepped up to pay without hesitation.

By the end of the shopping spree, Percival was nearly drowning in a sea of bags and boxes.

Diana, though far from penniless, felt the pinch. Sure, she had cash to burn, but that did not mean she

was thrilled about footing the bill for Vivienne's shopping desires.

And Vivienne? She did not bat an eyelid when Diana reached for her wallet. Not a single protest.

"Lunchtime, ladies. How about we grab a bite?" Diana suggested, taking the lead toward one of the mall's eateries.

Vivienne, feeling a pang of hunger, did not object.

The group settled into the restaurant. Zelda excused herself to the restroom, and Percival stepped outside to take a call.

At last, Diana had Vivienne to herself, just as she had hoped.

"Vivienne, see if there's anything else you'd like to eat. Order some more," Diana said with a warm smile, dabbing at her plate with a napkin.

"This is plenty," Vivienne replied, her smile touched with a hint of reserve.

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Vivienne cradled her mug of steaming coffee, the vaporous tendrils partially veiling her eyes, adding a touch of mystery to her gaze.

Diana's message to Vivienne was crystal clear: "Remember your place. You're nothing more than an

adopted granddaughter, not even by blood. Don't get too comfortable thinking you're one of us."

She was staking her claim as the Perez family's one and only darling daughter, warning Vivienne to stay in her lane.

How ironic. Who was really trying to prove they belong?

Vivienne chuckled. "I've never been one to hold back around Grandpa. You needn't worry on my behalf."

Diana let out a few forced laughs, sipping her coffee to mask her insecurity.

This Vivienne, she was certainly not one to mince words!

When Zelda and Percival arrived, the dinner table buzzed with their lively conversation. Diana, often finding herself on the periphery, could only offer a strained smile.

The meal passed with her in relative silence.

When it came time to settle the bill, Percival, the only gentleman present, had already discreetly taken care of it. It would not do to have the ladies pay.

Diana, pleased but pretending to chide, said, "I said this one was on me. Next time, you mustn't sneak ahead of me."

Zelda rolled her eyes in private disdain. She could not stand Diana's pettiness.

A meal's cost was hardly worth remembering, was it not?

With the evening advancing, Zelda and Diana bid farewell to Vivienne and Percival.

On the drive back, Percival mentioned, "Leopold's headed to Sea City to take over for Thomas. He's already on his way."

Vivienne acknowledged with a nonchalant, "Expected."

Percival, hands on the wheel, was still puzzling over Vance's agenda. What was he really after?

It was a matter of the mission, and neither Leopold nor Percival would discuss it openly.

Vivienne shifted to a more comfortable position, musing, "Vance sending Leopold to assist Griffin...

Could it be related to the ancient warrior lineage?"

"Maybe?"

Vivienne peered out the window. The recent events were complex, but undeniably, everything seemed to revolve around this ancient warrior lineage. Just how deep did the waters of this enigmatic, vast organization run?

As Percival pulled up to Vivienne's place, headlights flashed from the opposite direction—a car she recognized as Maddox's.

Vivienne and Percival exchanged a surprised glance, neither expecting Maddox to show up there.

Vivienne approached the car, "Uncle, what brings you here?"

Maddox opened the door. "Get in. We need to talk."

Percival, sensing the seriousness, drove off after watching Vivienne join Maddox.

Maddox drove them to a posh, unfamiliar villa neighborhood, searching for a bit before finding the place.

"Uncle, where are we?" Vivienne inquired.

"Just an old property I bought. Got a bit lost finding it. Dad never wanted to live in such a place, so we let it go to waste. Ah, but I remember the house number and the code," Maddox said as he unlocked the door. "Come on in."

The house clearly had been vacant for a while, with furniture covered in dust sheets.

"Make yourself at home. The place gets cleaned occasionally, but there's nothing in the fridge. Maybe I should've brought a case of Coke," Maddox sighed with disdain and regret.

Vivienne was not bothered. "What's up, Uncle? What did you need to see me about?"

Maddox settled in before speaking, "Vivienne, you're aware of the paternity test you took with Grandpa, right?"

She paused, then said, "Yes, I know. There was no genetic match."

Maddox rubbed his palms together. "There was a problem with that test. Someone tampered with it, but

I haven't found evidence yet. So today, your Uncle Yuri took another sample for testing."

Vivienne's eyes lifted. "And the results?"

"No match again. Otherwise, we wouldn't be here." Maddox's brows were furrowed, clearly not convinced by the outcome.

Vivienne nodded, her expression unchanged.

Her genes had been altered long ago, and only one person could match her DNA—Scott Brooks.

Even if she were Jasper's flesh and blood, they could not detect it.

"But Vivienne, I don't accept this result. I've got people investigating the testing center and the doctor involved. There's something wrong here," Maddox stated.

Hearing his determination, Vivienne asked, "Why are you so convinced the test result is fake?"

Maddox looked at her with unwavering certainty. "I believe you are my real niece, my sister's daughter."

Vivienne felt a rare surge of kinship, a steadfastness she seldom experienced. She was touched by

how firmly Maddox believed she was one of the Perezes.

"Thank you."

Vivienne smiled. "There's no need, Uncle. The truth is already out."

Maddox was perplexed. How could it be out already?

Vivienne retrieved her phone, showing him the paternity results she had conducted herself. "You are

my uncle."

Maddox took the phone, scrutinizing the conclusive result.

He stared for a long while, so long that Vivienne's phone screen dimmed several times over. Content of

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Although Maddox had always believed deep down that Vivienne was his biological niece, the stark

reality before his eyes was still astounding.

"Uncle Maddox, your eyes aren't deceiving you. This paternity test is real," Vivienne said, her voice tinged with emotion.

But with Jasper's illness yesterday and Maddox's unwavering support today, she no longer wanted to keep secrets.

She had simply wanted to find out who in the Perez family had tampered with the paternity test, and things were becoming clearer now.

Maddox clutched Vivienne's cell phone in one hand while the other covered his eyes, a choked sob escaping him.

Tears welled up in Vivienne's eyes, too, spilling over and trailing down her cheeks.

Chapter 565

Maddox had been ruminating for a long time. To alter the paternity test results right under Yuri's nose, the opposition must be formidable and well-prepared.

Taking out Vivienne's test result now would undoubtedly cause an uproar.

For Vivienne's safety and to swiftly uncover the mastermind, keeping her identity under wraps for as long as possible was imperative.

Everyone in the Perez family knew how much Jasper treasured Sasha.

With Sasha's daughter surfacing, Vivienne would become the Perez family's precious jewel. Frankly,

the entire Perez family might end up belonging to Vivienne.

This would inevitably make her a target for the person pulling the strings.

Vivienne's safety could not be guaranteed in such a scenario.

Thus, Vivienne's identity must remain a secret for the time being!

Vivienne nodded. "Okay, I'll follow your lead, Uncle Maddox."

Maddox covered his eyes again. Hearing Vivienne call him 'Uncle' so many times, it was this one

instance that pierced his heart the most.

He could not contain his tears, sobbing while saying, "Vivienne, you can't let anyone find out I cried in

front of you, especially Yuri. Otherwise, even Natalia and Yasmine's kindergarten would hear about it."

Vivienne could not help but laugh through her tears at Maddox's antics.

"Got it," she assured him.

After a moment, Maddox regained his composure, handed Vivienne her phone back, licked his dry lips,

and clasped his hands tightly together.

"Vivienne, how did Sasha really die? Who's your dad? What has your mom been through all these years?"

Maddox struggled to ask.

The Perez family had received Vivienne's background information early on, the first detail being her orphan status.

Now, having recognized Vivienne, Maddox also had to face the harsh truth that his beloved sister Sasha was no longer among the living.

As Vivienne recounted the story of her mother Karen's suicide, including her involvement with GTO and Vanguard Agency, she held nothing back from her closest kin.

At that moment, Vivienne felt she was not battling the world alone anymore.

Although Percival had always provided her stability, love and family were distinctly different comforts.

She could feel a void in her heart being silently filled.

Maddox was astounded. He had always imagined his sister to be a prodigy, but he never anticipated she would be this exceptional.

Sasha was truly the pride of the Perez family!

"My sister was the Lark that shook the whole Vanguard Agency. She was so close, and I had no idea,"

Maddox lamented with shock and guilt.

Although the Perez family had little direct contact with Vanguard Agency, they were still closely linked.

His sister having served as the captain of Vanguard Agency's special squad without his knowledge,

despite his frequent dealings with the agency, was shocking, to say the least.

"Yeah, Wolf is Percival. He was my mom's most promising apprentice. After her suicide, he took over

as the captain of the Vanguard Agency's special squad. After that, I lived anonymously, secluded in the

mountains, rarely coming down."

Vivienne wished she could hand Maddox a tissue, but they lacked supplies.

She had not expected him to be such a crybaby.

"I always said that Sasha had to be the one who created the bionic tech." Maddox almost wrung his

sleeve dry.

Speaking of bionics, Vivienne suddenly remembered the robot Finnian had used to test Percival.

In terms of material, efficiency, and operational lifespan, it was unmatched by anything the Ashford

family had achieved over the years.

But Finnian should not have had the talent in this field.

"Uncle, did you tell Uncle Yuri about the bionics?" Vivienne inquired.

Maddox shook his head. "No, I didn't say a word. Bionics were something my father intended for me to manage, which is like my own business. I can handle it as I see fit without interference from my father, so there was no need to mention it. Why?"

Vivienne relayed the details about the robot Finnian had showcased to Maddox. "Finnian was my mom's good friend. Knowing about the technology would not be hard for him, but the fact he could develop it is what puzzles me."

Maddox fell silent for a few seconds, considering Vivienne's words, and a thought slowly dawned on him.

"You mean..."

"I'm not sure yet, Uncle, that's why I need you to investigate. Find out what Finnian has been up to all these years, and that guy named Vesper around him, something just doesn't sit right with me."

Vivienne knew too well Finnian was familiar with her capabilities; a direct approach would be futile.

And if Finnian could fake his death without a trace for so long, then Percival likely would not have uncovered anything.

Finnian would certainly be cautious.

But if Maddox were to investigate, using the influence of the Perez family and his own skills, Finnian might not notice immediately.

Any piece of information could be crucial.

Maddox nodded in agreement. "Don't worry, I'll dig up everything on Finnian, down to when he hits the restroom."

Vivienne chuckled. "That might be a bit too detailed. Oh, Uncle, there's one more thing I need to ask you."

Maddox whipped out his smartphone to order some takeout, opting for some duck confit with a side of cola, prudently choosing not to crack open a beer with his niece.

"Alright." Seeing Maddox being so open, Vivienne was not about to miss this opportunity. Read at

She straightened up, her curiosity piqued. "What's this ancient warrior lineage thing all about?"

Vivienne's curiosity was piqued. "Secret skills? What kind of secret skills does our family have?"

Maddox winked, his expression turning serious. He stretched out his hand, pointing a finger towards a trash can not too far off.

Vivienne followed his gaze, but nothing happened.

"Uncle, what's up?"

If only I had begged Grandpa to teach me that trick, I might have won Willa's heart by now."

Chapter 566

Vivienne could not help but think it probably would not be that easy.

This kind of thing, straight out of a fantasy novel, had her utterly gobsmacked.

Telekinesis? It sounded like something out of a fairy tale.

But her shock didn't last long. Vivienne was the type to believe that the world was full of wonders beyond the grasp of her imagination.

"So that's how it is. Quite fascinating," she mused.

As they spoke, their takeout arrived. Thus, the two of them chatted away while chowing down.

Vivienne crunched on a piece of crispy duck skin, saying, "I've heard that these ancient warrior

lineages are usually hidden from the world. So why did the Martinez family decide to go public? And what about the Boyd family? Why were they kicked out of this secret society?"

Gnawing on a duck drumstick, Maddox replied, "A big part of why the Boyd family got the boot was their restlessness. They were too greedy, trying to use the power and prestige of the ancient warrior lineage to monopolize the market and control the economy. They even harassed the Martinez family, attempting to snatch away their arms-dealing rights. After their scheme was exposed, they decided to exile them and neutralize their special techniques so they could not pass them on and cause more trouble.

As for why our family and the Martinez family decided to go public..." Maddox belched, "Well, that's a long story. You might've heard about that one family that crossed the lineage and then vanished overnight?"

Vivienne nodded. "I've heard rumors. How did they manage to offend the ancient warrior lineage? Does it have anything to do with the Perez or the Martinez families?"

"We're all quite peaceable," Maddox said, taking a swig of cola. "The family that got wiped out was also

part of the lineage but more on the fringes. Their surname was Sheldon."

Vivienne's grip tightened.

Sheldon!

There was only one Sheldon that she knew of – Finnian!

Finnian, whose real name was Ulysses Sheldon.

And she had never known that Finnian was part of the ancient warrior lineage.

Maddox continued, "The Sheldon family's forte was more mystical – they were seers."

Now, Vivienne was certain Finnian was the last of the Sheldons Maddox spoke of.

After all, only she knew the extent of Finnian's abilities.

And Finnian had passed all of his skills on to her, even though she had not yet gained the "second sight."

"The Sheldons were respected within the lineage, though they were outliers. Your grandfather, in particular, was quite fond of them. He and the young Sheldon heir were close friends back in the day, though it's all ancient history now," Maddox added.

Vivienne gathered herself before asking, "Why were the Sheldons hunted down when the Boyds were

merely expelled? What led to their downfall?"

"The details are murky, even to your grandfather. Some say the Sheldons were struck by divine retribution; others claim they miscalculated something crucial, leading to their demise. But no one knows for sure.

After that, fractures formed within the lineage. Not outright hostility, but the unity was definitely shaken."

Maddox picked up a duck foot and chewed thoughtfully. "Our family went public under your grandfather's leadership – the first to do so."

Vivienne's thoughts were a whirlwind. "Why did he choose to go public? Was it because of the Sheldons?"

Maddox briefly considered, then said, "He never said, but I think so. After the Sheldons vanished without a trace, not to be spoken of again, it must've weighed on him. He's always valued loyalty, and the disappearance of his close friend could not have been easy to accept. The others in the lineage did not understand. My grandfather did not object, either. Besides, there are so many rules within the lineage. Dad was always a bit of a rebel. Going public gave him more freedom."

Seeing Vivienne's solemn expression, Maddox inquired, "What's on your mind, Vivienne?"

She shook her head. "What's the difference between living in the open and staying hidden? Aren't we all still serving the same purpose, still holding onto the title of the ancient warrior lineage? Why do all but the Perez and Martinez families choose to remain in the shadows?"

Maddox chuckled, a playful glint in his eyes as he leaned in and said, "Vivienne, do you know why the gods never walk among us mortals?"

Vivienne paused, her expression pensive, but she quickly grasped the meaning behind Maddox's words.

The ancient warrior lineage was like the deities enshrined within a cathedral to the common folk—revered in whispers, their presence felt but never seen.

This reverence was precisely why mentioning the ancient warrior lineage inspired awe.

But if they were to walk the earth, indistinguishable from the average Joe, it would inevitably lead to their assimilation by other prominent families, no longer perched on their lofty pedestals.

Even with immense power and wealth, they would not command the same respect.

After all, who would not revel in adoration?

It seemed some from the ancient warrior lineage fancied themselves as gods above all.

Generations of privilege had convinced them of their superior status, untouchable by mere mortals.

No wonder they could obliterate an entire family without a second thought.

"Did Grandpa face opposition from the other families when he chose to live among the public?"

Vivienne inquired.

Vivienne laughed, finally understanding where her uncle's fiery temper came from. "Grandpa really is

something else." Content belongs to Dramanovels.com

I thought we'd be rushing in to help, but it turned out we had to break up the fight instead."

Reminiscing softened Maddox's features, but the mention of Sasha brought a shadow of grief.

Vivienne nodded in agreement, her curiosity piqued "Uncle, do you have any idea who wouldn't want

me to recognize my own grandfather?"

"Who else but Diana? And I've always suspected that Sasha's disappearance and Willa's running away

are somehow tied to her," Maddox concluded with a firm resolve.

Chapter 567

When Maddox spoke of Diana, the disdain in his eyes was impossible to miss.

Vivienne blinked in confusion. "Wasn't she just six years old at the time? How could she possibly be involved in my mother's disappearance?"

Yuri leaned back into the sofa, his eyebrows knit together in concern. "Don't be fooled by her age.

She's cunning. Even as a child, she knew how to compete for Dad's affection, particularly against

Sasha. I've seen her glaring at Sasha with such spite. And on the day Sasha vanished, nobody else

was at home, just Sasha and Diana. When we returned, Diana was asleep in the garden, clutching one

of Sasha's sneakers.

She claimed Sasha had given them to her, but Sasha was ten at the time. How could her shoes

possibly fit Diana? I've always suspected Diana saw whoever took Sasha, but she denies it. And why

would they abduct Sasha and leave Diana? They were both from the Perez family; taking just one

doesn't make sense."

The more Maddox spoke, the tighter his fists clenched. "And then there's Willa. She was practically

adopted by our family, about the same age as your mom, and she was supposed to be your future

auntie through marriage with me. Everything was fine until she suddenly discovered she was a child of

F-Poison. Before she found out, I had no idea.

Diana and Willa were thick as thieves, and I've always suspected that Diana spilled the beans to Willa.

But Willa never admitted it and insisted on running away from home. She never even agreed to date me."

Vivienne pressed her lips.

Not yet agreed to date Maddox, and Willa was already the future auntie?

But Willa, a child of F-Poison?

"Uncle, I've met F-Poison. It was a woman, quite young, a few years junior to Mr. Wolf. How could she be Auntie Willa's mother?" Vivienne asked, puzzled.

Maddox shook his head. "The F-Poison I'm talking about is a man. If he's still alive, he'd be older than your grandfather. The person you're talking about isn't the same."

"Could it be that the title of F-Poison has been passed down? The F-Poison I've encountered and the one involved in my mom's abduction aren't the same person?"

"It's possible. RST itself has split into two factions, CK and GTO. We always thought F-Poison would remain with CK since it's been underground for years. But it seems he can't let go of his vile virus

research."

Surprise flickered in Vivienne's eyes. No wonder Flynn Ellington managed to strike a deal with GTO; they were all in the same camp.

She had underestimated Flynn.

"Where did the original F-Poison go? Does Flynn know?"

Given that Flynn was the boss of CK and had collaborated with the current F-Poison, he must surely know where the original F-Poison had gone.

Maddox shook his head again. "Flynn only mentioned that F-Poison was his mentor. He did not say much else, stubborn as a mule. No wonder he calls that man his mentor; they're all a bunch of freaks."

He quickly corrected himself. "I don't mean Percival is a freak; it's just anyone related to F-Poison, excluding your future auntie, of course."

Vivienne felt like she was on an emotional roller coaster. Taking a moment to compose herself, she asked, "Uncle, could you arrange for me to meet Flynn?"

If Flynn was F-Poison's disciple, he might know the truth about Karen's disappearance.

If she could coax even a few words of truth from him, the investigation into Diana might not be so cumbersome.

"Sure, I'll arrange it, but be careful. I always feel that Flynn's a bit twisted, unlike the other Ellingtons, who are just foolish and greedy. He's a different story."

"Okay, I'll be careful, Uncle. And you should be, too. If Diana is indeed up to something, then she must have an accomplice, and it's no small player."

Vivienne had a hunch that if Diana was involved, the bomb on the Ashford family's cruise ship was probably connected to her, too!

Maddox's voice grew heavy. "Vivienne, I have a favor to ask of you, and you must help me!"

"Uncle, just tell me what it is. If I can help, I will. If not, we'll get Percival to do it. Don't be so formal,"

Vivienne said, half-jokingly feeling Maddox was about to bow down to her.

Maddox's expression was earnest as he looked at Vivienne. "Please, help me find your future auntie. I can't find any trace of her, and she won't contact me. I'm at my wit's end."

Vivienne nearly choked on her bite of duck.

Oh, the things love does to a man.

Just like her dear Mr. Wolf.

"Alright, alright, I'll help. Just give me all the information about Auntie Willa, and I'll see what I can do."

"It's not about seeing what you can do; you must find her. Willa might be out there, hungry and cold. I'm

worried sick," Maddox sighed deeply, his mind racing with concern.

Vivienne shook her head, now somewhat intrigued by this woman who had captured the heart of the

notorious playboy, Maddox.

What kind of woman could make Maddox so preoccupied?

But finding Willa would not be easy. Having grown up in the Perez family, she must have learned a trick

or two, and her ability to evade pursuit was likely second to none.

Maddox was going to have to wait a bit longer.

In the dead of night at the sprawling Perez Mansion, Diana slipped out quietly, fired up her car, and

drove away.

Following her GPS, she parked her car in the upscale neighborhood of Rivenwood in front of a stately

villa.

She glanced around, turned off her headlights, and flicked on her flashlight, tapping on a front door.

"It's Diana, open up," she announced with a hint of impatience.

The door swung open to reveal a brightly lit interior.

The villa's living room was occupied by a single woman, sitting with her back to Diana, a decanter of aged red wine on the table. New chapter available on Dramanovels.com

Hearing Diana's grievance, the woman chuckled. "If I wanted you dead, Ms. Perez, I wouldn't have waited this long. Why so bitter?"

The woman turned around, revealing herself to be no other than Gillian Ashford!

Vivienne's genetic profile had been tampered with, ensuring that any test would exclude Scott as a biological relative.

But for someone like her, this was not a challenge.

Chapter 568

Diana flipped open the report, her eyes widening in disbelief as she saw today's date stamped at the top.

"What on earth?" She exclaimed, her voice tinged with alarm.

How could this be happening?

Why had Yuri not given up on the paternity test with Vivienne?

She had already tampered with the test results back in Sea City!

Gillian shrugged dismissively. "How should I know? If I had not been on my toes, Vivienne's true identity would have been exposed by now. Ms. Perez, it seems your standing in the Perez family is hanging by a thread."

"There's no need for your reminder, F-Poison!" Diana snapped back, her eyes ablaze with resentment.

And the woman in the villa, the one masquerading under Gillian's guise, was indeed F-Poison.

F-Poison examined her reflection in the mirror, apparently quite pleased with her current facade. She reveled in Diana's animosity without a hint of discomfort.

"Ms. Perez, anger leads to wrinkles, you know. You're still so young; you should take care of your skin,"

F-Poison advised, patting her own face gently.

Diana tore the paternity report into shreds and tossed it angrily into the trash bin.

She sat back, her gaze heavy with a cold intent. "Says someone who doesn't have to live off her own face. Do you really care about it?"

F-Poison did not shy away from the question. "Of course, I take good care of my skin. Even with a mask, I wouldn't let it suffer. A woman should never neglect herself."

As F-Poison spoke, she settled opposite Diana, lifting a glass of red wine. "Ms. Perez, I've done you a huge favor. Shouldn't I see some form of gratitude by now?"

Diana took a deep breath, her agitation subsiding. "I've only just arrived in Rivenwood, using my father's illness as an excuse to come. Otherwise, the Perez family wouldn't have wanted me here, fearing I'd charm my father into handing over the family fortune to me."

"But you are here now, aren't you? When will you fulfill your promise?"

F-Poison's tone was light, as though she was commenting on the fine taste of the wine.

But Diana stiffened, a tingling sense of dread washing over her. She swallowed hard, fighting to keep her hands steady. "I'll make good on my promise soon enough. Don't worry, I haven't forgotten our deal."

F-Poison swirled her glass, the wine tracing her lips, her calm eyes betraying a hint of danger.

Diana averted her gaze, not daring to meet F-Poison's eyes.

"Then, Ms. Perez, I look forward to our continued partnership. Don't disappoint me," F-Poison said with

a smile, standing to pour another glass of wine.

Diana breathed a sigh of relief. "Enjoy your drink. I must be going."

"Take care," F-Poison replied, still with her back to Diana, her voice airy and detached.

Diana hurried out of the villa and rushed to her car, her hands finally ceasing their tremble after a long moment.

Leaning on the steering wheel, she was haunted by the memory of that fateful day.

She was six years old.

In the Perez Mansion's backyard, she had watched a man scale the fence and approach herself and

Sasha as they played.

As protective as ever, Sasha positioned herself in front of Diana, eyeing the intruder warily. "Who are you? What are you doing in our yard?"

The man, his features obscured by a half-mask, revealed only his lips, shadowed by a faint stubble.

He crouched down, smiling at Sasha's question. "You must be Sasha, about the same age as my

daughter. I'm F-Poison. It's our first meeting, and I didn't bring a gift. You don't mind, do you?"

Sasha remained vigilant. "What do you want? Stay away from us!"

"I'm here to take you away, make your father lose you forever. That's my fun. Come on, Sasha. Let's

go," F-Poison said, extending a hand toward Sasha, his demeanor still pleasant.

Diana, hidden behind Sasha, did not know what to do.

But when she heard 'make your father lose you forever,' something stirred within her.

She glanced at Sasha, who was fiercely protecting her, and took a step back.

Sasha was ready to fight, confident in her own skills. Yet, Diana picked up a stone and struck Sasha

hard on the head.

Sasha turned with disbelief in her eyes before collapsing into darkness.

Diana handed the stone to F-Poison, her voice timid. "You said to make her go away from Dad forever."

The sound of the car horn snapped Diana back to reality, her forehead slick with sweat.

She sat up straight, took a deep breath, and started the car, her gaze hardening with resolve.

'Sasha, I won't let your daughter return to the Perez family. I managed to get rid of you thirty years ago.

I won't let your daughter become an obstacle now!' With malice, she thought.

...

At the Rivenwood Penitentiary.

Vivienne pushed through the doors.

Inside, Flynn was curled up on the floor, clutching at his collar, gasping for breath, his body tormented

as if covered in crawling ants, both painful and itching.

Vivienne took a seat, twirling a lollipop in her mouth, her face etched with a mocking smile.

Flynn was Percival's favorite uncle in the Ellington family, a figure he had admired since childhood.

In Percival's heart, Flynn's stature was no less than Richard Ellington's.

But what had Flynn done?

He exploited Percival's trust, gradually cornering him, plunging him into the maelstrom time and again.

In the final moments, Flynn had the audacity to try to use the entire Ellington family to manipulate

Percival.

And for what? A mere inheritance dispute.

Percival never cared for the title of heir to the Ellington family.

Yet the empire Richard had built needed a reliable successor to carry on the legacy. Updated at

Once things settled down, Percival intended to pass the baton to Flynn.

But he had never anticipated...

This betrayal had always been a thorn in Percival's side.

Though he never spoke of it, Vivienne knew.

There Flynn was, curled up, his hands clutching his stomach, eyes glaring at Vivienne with venomous fury.

"Where's the antidote?"

His former glory had long since faded away.

Vivienne glanced at her watch and said calmly, "Congratulations, you've survived the poison's torment once more."

Chapter 569

Flynn took a deep breath. Sure enough, the agony coursing through him was beginning to subside.

He sat up straight, his gaze steady on Vivienne. "You came all this way to see me. What else do you want to know?"

Vivienne tossed her lollipop into the trash can without a second thought. "I'm more interested in what

you have to say."

"I have nothing to say to you." Flynn leaned against the headboard, his eyes closing, signaling he was done talking.

Vivienne, unfazed, shifted to a more comfortable position. "Is the infamous F-Poison your mentor? Is he dead?"

A flicker passed through Flynn's eyes, but he remained silent.

"You're not still waiting for F-Poison to come to rescue you, are you? That's naive, Uncle Flynn!"

Standing up, Vivienne seemed ready to leave.

That got a reaction. Flynn called out to her, "You're here to get the scoop on your mom's abduction, right? Sasha's."

Vivienne froze, a piercing look shooting from her eyes like daggers sinking deep into Flynn's skin.

Suddenly, Flynn felt as if flames were raging inside him, threatening to consume him entirely.

"Vivienne, I'm the only one in this world who knows what happened to your mom after she was taken. If you want the truth, you must cure me of this poison!"

Vivienne's gaze softened, and Flynn felt immediate relief.

Struggling to his feet, Flynn approached the balcony. "Bring someone from the Perez family to see me."

Vivienne's frown deepened, but she left without a word.

Flynn chuckled, his eyes glinting with meaning. "There are things in this world that defy description.

Only the ordinary can be understood."

Vivienne gave Flynn a long, hard look before walking out of the stifling cell and exhaling heavily outside.

Maddox opened the car door for her. "How did it go?" He asked.

Vivienne shook her head. "He didn't spill anything."

"Damn." Maddox slammed the steering wheel. "Flynn's a slippery one."

"Let's go home, Uncle Maddox. I've had enough for one day."

Flynn claimed he knew all about her mother's disappearance?

Could F-Poison really trust him that much?

"So, Vivienne, what else did he say?" Maddox asked as he drove.

"He wants to meet someone from the Perez family. Didn't specify who."

Maddox's expression darkened. "He's seen Dad and Yuri. What the fuck does he want next—to see

Natalia and Yasmine?"

Vivienne looked up. "Uncle, why don't you think he wants to see you or Diana?"

"He's locked up. How could he know that Diana and I are in Rivenwood?" Maddox scoffed. "Maybe he wants both of us to come over just to mess with us."

"Flynn said there are things in this world that defy description. Only the ordinary can be understood,"

Vivienne mused. "What did he mean by that?"

Maddox shook his head. "Who knows? The ramblings of a madman, yet strangely profound."

Vivienne smiled faintly, choosing to remain silent.

Maddox dropped her off at her home before driving away.

Back home, Vivienne sank into the bathtub, lost in thought about Flynn.

He wanted to see someone from the Perez family, but who was he most eager to meet?

She ran through the names of the Perez family in her mind. Then her eyes snapped open.

Willa.

Flynn was F-Poisons' apprentice, and Willa was his only daughter. Flynn would want to see the one who shared a bloodline with his mentor.

Vivienne wiped her face, grabbed a towel to dry her hair, and then reached for her phone to call Draven.

"How's the search for Vesper going?" She asked.

"Vivienne, that Vesper is a ghost. We can't even get a bead on him," Draven complained. "Our guys are getting played."

It was the first time Draven felt this frustrated since he joined the Nine Mystics Society.

Vesper was elusive; they would lose track of him in less than 10 feet, and after so many days, they could not obtain the tiniest information about him, not even his residence address. Draven was at his wits' end.

Vivienne pinched the bridge of her nose. This was quite expected. She was well aware that someone like Vesper would not be easy to track. "Stop chasing shadows then. What about the other one I asked about? Any leads?"

There was a pause on the other end, and then Draven said, "Vivienne, about Willa Perez, something's

odd."

"What is it?" Vivienne asked, curiosity piqued.

Draven rarely described someone as 'odd.'

"I've come across some clues about her, but they vanish every time I get close. At first, I thought it was

the Perez family cleaning up, but it's not them. They lost Willa's trail long ago."

Vivienne stood up, swiftly dressing amid the steam, and opened the bathroom door. "Who's helping

Willa from the shadows?"

Having failed to deliver on not just one but two assignments, Draven found it hard to face Vivienne with

his usual confidence.

Since its inception, the Nine Mystics Society had never encountered a task it could not tackle. Yet now,

they had hit two dead ends in rapid succession, a blow that Draven could not easily shake off.

"It's fine. Keep on their trail, and if you spot anything unusual, report your location immediately. I'll go

over personally."

"Understood."

Ending the call, Vivienne walked over to the window and picked up her specially brewed chamomile tea. She gazed out quietly, contemplating.

Who was pulling the strings behind Willa? Was it someone from the GTO or one of her own?

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In the quiet Rivenwood suburb.

Willa scrutinized the note in her hands, her brow furrowed in deep thought.

These days, she could sense someone tracking her movements. She had not expected them to be so relentless, making it difficult to slip away unnoticed.

Each escape had been narrow, a game of cat and mouse where she barely managed to keep her tracks hidden.

But as the pursuit intensified, Willa found herself cornered, tempted to confront her pursuer in a final showdown.

Yet, at those critical moments, she would find a mysterious note guiding her to safety, allowing her to evade the watchful eyes tracking her.

Willa had no idea who was leaving these notes or who was able to locate her so precisely, time and

again, and place the notes right where she would find them.

But she knew one thing – whoever was behind the notes and the people tracking her possessed skills far beyond her own; otherwise, they would not have found her so effortlessly.

Crumpling the note into a ball, Willa tossed it into the trash can. She then twisted the throttle of her car and sped off into the distance, the engine roaring as she disappeared down the road.

Chapter 570

At the headquarters of Rivenwood Vanguard Agency.

Percival nudged open the door to the director's office. "You wanted to see me, Vance?"

Vance gestured towards the chair across from his desk. "Take a seat, Percival."

Percival squinted slightly before complying, settling into the chair facing Vance.

"What's Vivienne been up to lately?" Vance casually flipped through the documents on his desk as he inquired.

Percival lifted his gaze, his tone airy. "Vance, should I be concerned that you're taking an interest in my fiancée?"

Vance shot him a look, chuckling. "No need for that. My romance is quite blissful."

The joke did little to amuse Percival, who mainly remained expressionless.

Vance snapped the folder shut and looked up. "Can you ask Vivienne to swing by HQ? I've got a rather pressing matter, and I'd like to discuss a potential partnership with her."

Percival's eyes flickered. "What kind of partnership?"

Vance's smile persisted, "That's something I don't think I need to share with you."

His stance was clear: even though Percival was Vivienne's betrothed, Vance preferred to approach her directly with this matter.

Percival's lips curled into a slight smile. "Alright then."

With that, Percival stood and left.

Vance watched him go, the smile slowly fading from his face.

Back in his own office, Percival dialed Vivienne.

"Vivienne, he's looking to collaborate. Didn't say on what."

Vivienne's laughter filtered through, "Vance loves his mysteries, but what's the point? It'll come out eventually."

Percival's smile broadened. "This seems different from the last time. Want to come over?"

"Sure, I'm on my way. I've got a few questions for him myself, like where on earth he's sent Leopold."

"Great, I'll pick you up."

Suddenly, the roar of a motorbike came through the phone, and Percival paused, "You're here?"

A hint of regret in her voice, Vivienne responded, "Yep, just outside. Came to pick you up after work,

but it looks like you're in for some overtime."

Percival chuckled warmly as he stepped out to greet her.

The remaining staff at Vanguard Agency watched in awe.

What had gotten into the deputy director?

Man, seeing the deputy director smile is like seeing a ghost!

Only Anna glanced up quietly before looking away indifferently.

'Percival only looked like this for one reason. These colleagues of mine, so sheltered,' She thought.

Amid the stunned looks, Percival took Vivienne's hand, and they headed to the director's office.

"Come in," Vance called out upon hearing the knock.

He looked up, surprised to see Percival return so soon with Vivienne in tow.

"That was quick. You're too modest, Percival," Vance said with a smile, standing to usher them to the couch.

Vivienne sat across from Vance, her smile enigmatic. "When Mr. Edwards summons, I make it quick."

"There's no one else here. Just call me Uncle," Vance offered as he poured them tea.

Vivienne took the cup, inhaling the aroma, "Lovely coffee. You must have something complex in mind for such hospitality, Mr. Edwards."

Vance raised his eyebrows at her persistent formality, "Yes, the collaboration I have in mind is crucial."

He paused before continuing, "You're behind the famous Frostfire Intelligence Agency, aren't you?"

Vivienne did not deny it. After all, as the director of Sea City Vanguard Agency, it was no surprise

Vance knew this.

"That's right. Whatever you need to know, Mr. Edwards, the right price will get you the information."

Vance let out a laugh. "I need to dig into a cold case. Name your price."

Vivienne was stunned for a moment. A cold case?

She looked up and smiled. "A case that even Vanguard Agency can't crack?"

Vance stood and walked to a locked cabinet, retrieving an old, worn file.

"Vanguard Agency protects national security. We can't dig into everything. And this case involves an ancient warrior lineage. Take a look."

The mention of the ancient lineage caused a flicker in Vivienne's eyes.

She opened the file, and the title alone weighed heavily upon her.

[Case 0404: The Sheldon Family Disappearance]

The Sheldons, her mentor's family!

She scanned the scarce information, which listed members of the Sheldon family and some basic details.

At the bottom, highlighted in red, was a single name: Ulysses, age twenty, male.

Beyond that, nothing.

Ulysses was Finnian, her mentor.

Vance's smile returned. "You're sharp as ever. Indeed, it's Ulysses I want you to investigate."

"You're not in the loop, Vivienne. The Sheldons, part of an ancient line of warriors, were rumored to have mastered the art of longevity."

This was news to Vivienne.

Since when did Finnian, the fortune-teller, dabble in the art of longevity?

Yet, considering Finnian was pushing ninety and still as spry as a middle-aged man, the notion did not seem too far-fetched.

“Vance, we rely on science,” Vivienne said, eyeing Vance as if he was spinning a fairy tale. Read at

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Deep down, though, she knew Vance was not entirely full of it.

Ulysses, too, aged with time, albeit more gracefully than his peers, thanks to his fighting arts regimen, thus the whispers of everlasting life.

Ulysses had always said life was a roll of the dice; some people are blessed with long years, but death comes for everyone.

Many have lived a century, sure, but two hundred years? Unheard of.

Vivienne, a medic by training, knew better. Organs wear out with time, functions cease, and death inevitably follows.

The cycle of birth, aging, illness, and death was fundamental.

No one could live for two centuries.

Yet now, considering the secret techniques of the ancient warrior lineage, maybe hitting two hundred was not entirely impossible. Ulysses was a prime example.

But it was likely limited to those in the warrior lineage. Nonetheless, true immortality remained impossible even for them.