

Million-Dollar 601

Chapter 601

The "Destruction Plan" was the ill-fated op that Karen led with the Vanguard Agency's elite squad, ending in a devastating failure.

After the mission's collapse, Lark went AWOL, Micah vanished into obscurity, and Vance Edwards went deep undercover while the rest of the special squad was nearly wiped out.

Years later, Lark's deputy team leader, Daphne, met a mysterious end.

Lark herself ended it all with a supposed suicide.

Due to the tragic consequences of the mission, the "Destruction Plan" was classified as top secret by the headquarters, never to be spoken of again.

For years, Percival had been itching to unravel the whole story, but his clearance level was far from sufficient.

Now, however, no longer being a part of the Vanguard Agency, he found himself with more freedom to act.

Vance rubbed his temples, his voice grave. "You should know that even with my clearance, I can't access those files."

"You just need to give me the "Destruction Plan" code. I know you remember it better than anyone."

The past haunted every surviving member, and Vance had once climbed to the rank of second-in-command at the Sea City Vanguard Agency HQ.

He definitely had access to the detailed case files and that unforgettable sequence of numbers.

Vance hesitated. "You're asking me to make a mistake."

"You've done it before, Vance. It's important to me."

Silence stretched on the other end of the line before Vance finally spoke, "245214216589."

After getting the information, Percival hung up and entered the code into his computer.

Seconds later, the connected printer whirled to life, detailing the "Destruction Plan" documents.

Vivienne picked up the report, scrutinizing every word, imprinting them in her memory.

For years, she had hacked into the Vanguard Agency's secure servers seeking the "Destruction Plan"

files but always hit a wall at the final encryption.

No doubt, this was Karen's handiwork.

No matter how skilled the hacker, without the correct file code, the documents remained unseen.

And a wrong input would trigger a counter-hack sequence, pinpointing the intruder's location within a second.

Thus, Vivienne had never succeeded—until now.

Percival slid over, handing Vivienne a glass of juice, and said, "How's it looking?"

"Strange." She passed the papers to Percival and began rapidly typing on her microcomputer.

Percival's printer came to life once more. Standing up, he compared the new printouts with the old; his gaze turned icy.

One was the original operation trajectory of the "Destruction Plan."

The other was the only remaining document after Karen's "suicide," clearly showing GTO's movements during the "Destruction Plan."

The routes matched almost perfectly.

Time-stamped analysis revealed it wasn't the Vanguard Agency chasing GTO but rather GTO ambushing the special squad!

It proved that the intel on GTO's location provided to the "Destruction Plan" was a sham!

The plan was a calculated, swift annihilation of the Vanguard Agency's special squad, orchestrated by

an insider in cahoots with GTO!

Percival's face was as cold as ice. With such blatant evidence, no wonder Lark never returned to the Vanguard Agency.

She must have realized there was a mole within their ranks.

Vivienne turned another page, her finger tracing a red line on the map. "This route? My mom led the first squad to safety along it."

Percival clenched the document, his knuckles white. "It's because of this decision that most of the first squad survived, though they eventually walked into an ambush. Still, it was a better fate than the total loss of the other squads."

"But it's also because of her decision that the Agency suspected her, leading to the relentless pursuit,"

Vivienne added, pointing at an image of the squad's uniform. "Our pursuers wore this. I remember."

Her words tightened Percival's chest.

He remembered.

Karen had trusted only him and Micah within the Vanguard Agency.

Despite being hunted from all sides, she never revealed to Percival who was after her.

Now it seemed clear—if Karen had shared the truth, it might have unleashed a storm of blood and betrayal within the Vanguard Agency, and whether Percival would have survived was anybody's guess.

Back then, his power was not yet fully developed, and even Karen was in dire straits. The truth remained buried.

But Percival had never imagined that someone within the Agency had also been gunning for Karen!

The two sat in silence, the weight of revelations heavy in the air.

Percival turned over the last page of the dossier with a sense of dread. There, in meticulous handwriting, was the detailed operation plan.

Lark was to lead the strike team in a raid, Ashen Pigeon was in charge of logistics, and Sky was the mastermind responsible for command and control.

Percival's eyes lingered on the name signed at the bottom of the document.

[Noah.] Content of Dramanovals.com

Vivienne saw the name, too, and she felt a peculiar interest in the name Noah.

Percival narrowed his eyes. "Vivienne, I need to see Vance."

"Okay, see you tomorrow," Vivienne said, giving Percival a quick peck on the cheek before leaving with a smile.

After watching Vivienne go, Percival arranged to meet Vance at a tea house owned by the Ellington Group.

"What do you need?" Vance inquired as he settled into his seat.

Percival slid the document with Noah's signature across the table to Vance. "When the Vanguard Agency was getting hammered by GTO, didn't you take any measures in response?"

Vance was taken aback that Percival had singled out Noah's name. After all, throughout the document,

Noah had only one signature, while the rest bore the mark of Vance's command.

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Vance was clearly growing impatient, the topic at hand obviously not to his liking.

"The big boss of the organization, Noah, is who you guys refer to as Rover," he said.

Percival's tone was firm, leaving no room for doubt.

Vance had thought Percival was certain, so he admitted, "Yes, Noah is Rover. Back in the day, I was the commander, but when the plan changed at the last minute, I had to go through the boss."

Percival chuckled lightly. "Figures."

It was then that Vance realized he had been played. He sighed, "Percival, you can suspect me or

Micah all you want, but with Noah, there's no need."

"Because he's your mentor?" Percival raised an eyebrow, his gaze steady on Vance.

Vance nodded, "Yes, Noah was our mentor. He brought us together and led us to where we are now.

He's the most accomplished commander Vanguard Agency has ever had and your mentor's idol. I can

vouch for him, Percival. Noah's clean. He didn't take part in that operation!"

"But he signed off on it, Vance. I can't believe you've never doubted him," Percival's tone turned colder.

Silence fell over Vance, and for a long while, he found no words.

Indeed, after the mission's failure, not just Karen but also Micah and Vance themselves had harbored

deep suspicions within Vanguard Agency.

Compared to Karen and Micah's emotional ties and utter trust, Vance was a bit more ruthless. He had

even doubted Noah, the very mentor who had brought him into the fold.

Vance had investigated, sure, but Noah was Noah, without a single discrepancy.

Eventually, Vance shifted his suspicions to Micah.

That was why, later on, the rift between Micah and Vance only deepened.

These suspicions were put on hold when Vance went undercover.

Vance shared all the details of his past investigation into Noah with Percival, saying, "I did doubt him, but my mentor is innocent. You're wasting your time, Percival."

Percival remained silent, his eyes holding a strange light.

After a moment, he left with all the documents.

Vance did not try to stop him; he just watched Percival go before answering a call from Noah.

"Yes, don't worry, everything's fine," Vance said with a smile, seemingly at peace after hearing his mentor's voice.

Whatever Noah said on the other end of the line made Vance press his lips together and nod. "Yeah, I told him. Yes, cooperation is based on honesty; otherwise, how can we get their help?"

After hanging up, Vance's smile faded, and he stood up somberly, leaving the coffee shop.

Percival, after leaving the coffee shop, tapped into all his connections to dig deeper into Noah's past.

Knowing the name and with Percival's own savvy, he still found the information limited.

But it was enough to deepen his understanding of Noah.

After the "Destruction Plan" failed, Noah retired, only to be rehired by Vanguard Agency as the head trainer, and his protégés spread across all systems within the agency.

He had fought alongside Yorick multiple times, a comrade-in-arms bound by life and death.

Their bond was as strong as Percival's with Leopold.

The most outstanding disciples were Karen, Micah, and Vance.

"Respected, well-connected, decorated, a teacher of many."

That was what went through Vivienne's mind as she looked over the documents Percival brought back.

The only one who could match Noah was Yorick.

Although Noah never held a high office like a director or deputy director, his title could not be measured by the badges on his uniform.

Percival furrowed his brows, admiring the resume, especially the major cases handled by Noah, which even he could not rival.

Battles fought, narrow escapes from death, it made doubting such a seasoned leader seem foolish.

Setting down the documents, Percival looked at Vivienne before pulling her into an embrace, fingers

playing with the ends of her hair.

He sighed slowly, as if declaring war or lost in thought, "Vivienne, we're in for a tough fight ahead."

Vivienne stared ahead, her gaze not fixed on any point, as if stretching out to the endless horizon.

"And we need an ally."

Percival's lips curved into a slight smile, his chin resting on Vivienne's head, gently rubbing against her.

...

In a park in Rivenwood, F-Poison was leisurely basking in the sun.

She wore sunglasses and a pure white sundress, her seaweed-like hair flowing down her back.

A specific ringtone sounded, and F-Poison smiled faintly before answering.

"Hello, it's me."

Whatever the person on the other end said, a sly look passed behind F-Poison's sunglasses.

"Relax, I won't let you be exposed. Keep me posted on your location."

After hanging up, F-Poison watched two kids chasing each other around in the park, a slow smile

creeping across her face.

She propped her chin on her hands, resting on her knees, murmuring, "This is going to be fun."

...

At the Perez Mansion.

Aside from Jasper, not a single soul had a kind look for Diana.

Even the youngsters, Natalia and Yasmine, harbored a grudge.

They were still fuming over the incident at their birthday party when their auntie allowed her date to shame Vivienne!

Who says kids forget slights easily?

Unfortunately for her, it was not working.

Natalia and Yasmine always seemed to find a way to avoid her, not even seeking her out for play when she was the only one available in the house.

With each passing day of cold shoulder treatment, Diana's resentment grew, along with an increasing bitterness towards Vivienne.

Jasper recognized that Diana had crossed a line this time.

Thankfully, Maddox was not the type to take things too far. At most, he would ignore her, and out of

respect for Jasper, he refrained from doing anything excessive.

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Seeing Jasper looking glum, Zelda could not help but offer some words of comfort. "Dad, I know each child is dear to you, just like Natalia and Yasmine. I always try to be fair, too. But respect is earned.

Diana hasn't even apologized to Vivienne yet. Instead, she's playing the victim. How can we not complain?

Besides, you've been nothing but good to Diana over the years. Whatever others have, she has too, and often more. It's her own lack of gratitude that's the problem."

Jasper knew in his heart that Zelda was not one to make a fuss. Raised in the affluent Lynette family, she was not inclined to pettiness or suspicion.

Her words now were a sign of genuine anger and disappointment towards Diana.

"Alas, Diana's temperament isn't as adaptable as the others. She only had Willa to play with when she was little, and Willa was quite the ice queen herself. If Sasha were around, Diana might not have turned out so reclusive..." Jasper made a feeble excuse, but it was enough for the moment.

Zelda gave a wry smile, saying nothing more. She knew all too well that a father's heart always aches

for his daughters.

Just then, Natalia and Yasmine came running in, laughing out loud. "Grandpa, Vivienne's here!"

At the mention of Vivienne, Jasper sprang from his recliner and hurried to welcome her.

Zelda shook her head in mild exasperation. "Dad, slow down. Vivienne keeps telling you to take it easy."

Jasper usually took Vivienne's words as gospel, but now, eager to greet her, he cast caution to the wind.

"Vivienne, have you eaten yet? I thought you were not coming until tomorrow. I haven't prepared anything special," Jasper chatted affectionately with Vivienne.

Vivienne stayed by Jasper's side all day, from morning till night, joining them for all three meals.

The Perez family was overjoyed. Vivienne's visits were usually brief, just long enough for a meal, but today, it felt like she had truly come home.

After dinner, Vivienne joined Jasper for a game of chess in the yard.

"Grandpa, have you heard of Noah?" Vivienne inquired.

Jasper paused, "Noah? Yorick's partner, Noah?"

Vivienne nodded. "That's him. Do you know him?"

"Not really, just had a few dealings with him. The guy's a bit of an oddball. We don't play along... I

mean, we couldn't work together." Jasper's face was a study of conflicting emotions as he tried to

maintain his image in front of Vivienne.

Vivienne chuckled. She was well aware of Jasper's playful personality.

"What's so odd about him? I've heard a lot of people at Vanguard Agency were trained by him. He can't

be that strange," Vivienne commented.

Jasper nodded. "He certainly deserves the respect. Unlike Yorick, who was eager to climb the ranks,

Noah never chased power. He would decline promotions, saying he preferred to be on the front lines.

That's admirable. But he seems to have this fascination with the ancient warrior lineages, which I find

unsettling."

Vivienne looked up, a flicker of doubt in her eyes as she asked, "He's interested in the ancient warrior

lineages?"

"Yes, he's been trying to merge the ancient warrior lineages with the internal factions of the Vanguard

Agency."

Vivienne realized something and said, "So he fought to protect Vance because they share the same goal!"

"No." Jasper chuckled, shaking his head slightly. "He wants the ancient warrior lineages to take charge, not like Vance, who wants to kick them out of the Vanguard Agency."

Vivienne was taken aback. Noah was not part of the ancient warrior lineage, so why would he want them in power?

Jasper saw the confusion on Vivienne's face and explained, "That's why I find it strange. After Yorick moved up, I lost touch with Noah. All I know is that he stayed on the front lines before being rehired, and all his files are top-secret within the Vanguard Agency."

There had always been two factions within the Vanguard Agency.

One was the ancient warrior lineage, which focused on defense and included families like the Martinez family, who supplied the Agency with weaponry.

The other was the Vanguard Agency special squad, like Vance and Micah, who also provided financial support for the defense teams.

These two factions had coexisted for years, each holding sway and influencing major decisions. They worked independently, but their interests were interwoven.

This explained why Jasper could decide on Percival's position and why Leopold could easily join the Martinez family's tech company.

"Vivienne, what made you bring up Noah?" Jasper asked.

Vivienne shook her head, placing a piece on the board, "Nothing much, Grandpa. You've lost this game."

Only then did Jasper realize he had been distracted by the conversation. He looked down at the board, his fingertips subtly twitching.

In the bowl of chess pieces beside him, something seemed to stir.

Vivienne caught sight of the situation and swiftly grabbed the bowl. "Grandpa, no cheating! You promised me you'd go to bed. What kind of old man stays up late watching cartoons anyway?"

"That'll teach you to snitch!"

After finally getting Jasper to bed, Vivienne prepared to leave the Perez Mansion.

On her way out, she bumped into Diana.

Vivienne gave Diana a long, piercing look, her lips curling into a mocking smile.

Diana had never imagined Vivienne to be so bold, so forthright!

Vivienne let out a laugh and said to Diana, "Auntie, you once claimed that even though the Perez family adopted you, Grandpa treated you just like his own daughter. Well, now I see it's not quite the case."

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"Vivienne, you..."

Vivienne raised a finger to her lips, silencing her. "Don't worry; I'll be taking your place soon enough."

Diana watched in disbelief as Vivienne walked away with a sneer. Clenching her fists, she seethed.

"I always thought you'd be the forever innocent little bunny, but you're nothing but a sly fox, Vivienne.

Just wait; your moment of triumph won't last long!"

"What are you mumbling about in the dead of night? You scared the daylights out of me. I heard you mention Vivienne. What's up with her?"

Startled, Diana spun around to see that it was Maddox.

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Maddox furrowed his brow, "Did Vivienne really say that?"

Diana's eyes flickered with hope, "Yeah, she said exactly that, Maddox. What do you think she's trying to pull?"

She thought she had finally found a crack in Maddox's armor, a chance to see him stop shielding Vivienne.

But Maddox just shrugged it off. "That kid, talking nonsense. She doesn't need to replace you; you were never comparable to her in the first place."

With that, Maddox shook his head and walked away, muttering about how Vivienne always overthinks things.

Diana felt like she had been struck by lightning. Her nails dug into her palms, but she could not feel the pain.

Maddox had said she was never comparable to Vivienne!

All things aside, she had been part of the Perez family for nearly three decades, ever since she was a baby.

And Vivienne was just an outsider whose place in the family had not even been confirmed.

How could Maddox say such a thing?

Diana was seething. She would see to it that Vivienne paid with her life, now, immediately, without delay!

After leaving the Perez Mansion, Vivienne received a call from Maddox, "Vivienne, I did what you told me to, but it's kind of odd. Why provoke Diana like that? She's not one to take things lightly; she must be fuming by now."

Vivienne chuckled on the other end. "No worries, as long as it's been said."

Maddox did not press further. "Alright, mission accomplished. Watch your back, and if you need me, just holler."

"Actually, there's one thing," Vivienne said playfully, "Tomorrow, could you take Grandpa and everyone out? Leave someone behind, an auntie or anyone apart from Diana."

Maddox paused, "What for?"

"It'll come in handy."

"Okay, you call the shots." Maddox laughed and hung up.

He never questioned Vivienne's motives or tried to stop her. He just played along.

After all, he was the best uncle in the world, even better than Yuri!

Hanging up, Vivienne stretched in the car and clicked her tongue.

Percival glanced at her with a smile. "What's up?"

"Ever since you've been driving yourself, I've missed kissing you in the car!"

Percival nearly slammed on the brakes hard enough to launch himself out of the vehicle!

Vivienne was becoming increasingly bold!

But he liked it.

The next day, Maddox herded the family out early, claiming they were going for a health check-up.

But Zelda was so sleepy she refused to budge.

Diana, feigning busyness, got excused, and Maddox left with the rest of the family in a flurry of activity.

Yawning, Zelda turned to head back to bed.

But before she could reach her room, dizziness overwhelmed her, and she collapsed to the floor.

Behind her, Diana's face twisted into a sinister smile as she looked down at the unconscious Zelda, her eyes cold.

"Dear Zelda, you'll be my shield for the day. If something fatal happens, don't blame me!" Diana

snickered, clapping her hands.

Two figures emerged from Diana's room, swiftly binding the unconscious Zelda and whisking her away

from the Perez Mansion.

Diana went back to bed, only to wake up and reach for her phone.

A video popped up – Zelda's kidnapping.

"Let me go! If you dare hurt me, the Lynette and Perez families will make you pay!"

A slap cracked across Zelda's face.

"Shut the hell up. Tell your husband either he pays up or get ready to pick up your dead body!"

Diana watched the video, squeezed out a few crocodile tears, then called Vivienne, sobbing.

"Vivienne! Zelda's in trouble. I can't reach Dad or my brothers. What do we do?"

On the phone, Diana's voice was heavy with tears, her distress palpable.

Vivienne yawned, feigning confusion. "What's that? Say it again!"

"Zelda's been kidnapped! The kidnappers want a ransom, but I can't get hold of Dad or my brothers.

Vivienne, you've got to come quick. Zelda's in real danger!"

"I'm on my way," Vivienne said, hanging up and soon appearing at the Perez Mansion.

Diana showed her the video of Zelda's kidnapping and said, "I've got enough money, Vivienne. They can't be reached. Let's go pay the ransom. I'm afraid if we're late, Zelda might be in real danger."

Vivienne nodded. "Let's go."

Diana watched Vivienne rush to the car, a sly smile on her lips.

She knew Vivienne would come to Zelda's rescue; after all, Zelda had always treated her like a daughter.

Even if it meant risking her own neck, Vivienne would come for the sake of her place in the Perez family.

On the road, Diana kept trying to reach the kidnappers, but there was no trace of them.

When they arrived at the designated spot, they were told to move to another location.

After several switches, Vivienne realized they had been led to a deserted foothill.

Then came another message from the kidnappers, instructing them to carry the money up the mountain.

With no choice, they complied.

Climbing the mountain with bags of cash, they finally reached the top.

From a distance, they saw Zelda tied to a tree, flanked by two menacing kidnappers.

Vivienne stepped forward, tossing the bag of money to the ground. "Here's your ransom. Now let my auntie go!"

One of the kidnappers approached and counted the money, but his eyes showed no greed for the cash.

Vivienne narrowed her eyes. "Who the hell are you people?!" Updated at Dramanovels.com

With a thud, Vivienne felt a heavy blow to her head.

Turning slowly, she caught sight of Diana holding a large rock, smiling sweetly at her.

"Vivienne, history's repeating itself. This is how your mom got snatched back in the day. Irony's a bitch, ain't it?"

Vivienne could not muster a word, her eyes shutting in defiance, and then darkness engulfed her consciousness completely.

When she came to, Zelda was tied up beside her, and the two goons—one stood by Diana, the other by Gillian Ashford.

Vivienne observed the faces before her in silence, "You're F-Poison!"

Vivienne tried to wriggle out of the ropes, but her body was weak, clearly poisoned.

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Vivienne took a deep breath, realizing there was no way she could neutralize the poison coursing

through her veins. She turned to look at Zelda, relieved to see her aunt unharmed and conscious.

Zelda's eyes, large and watery, were fixed on Vivienne, filled with concern.

"Vivienne, are you okay? Does your head hurt? Feeling dizzy?" Zelda asked quickly, her voice tinged with guilt.

Vivienne shook her head, only to feel the room spin even more. "I'm fine, Auntie. Are you hurt?"

"I'm not," Zelda replied, her voice heavy with worry, then her gaze shifted to Diana. "Diana, you double-crossing snake, how could you collaborate with GTO? You know full well that's Dad's Achilles heel!"

"So what?" Diana stepped forward, her face twisted with resentment as she slapped Zelda hard across the cheek.

"Who do you think you are to tell me what to do, Zelda?"

Diana then grabbed Zelda by the throat. "Do you have any idea how much I've loathed you since you

married into the Perez family? The only ones who ever dared to cross me were you and that smug

Maddox. I've wanted you out of the Perez family for ages!"

Zelda could not speak, but her defiant gaze never wavered.

That defiance only fueled Diana's spite. "Oh, so you like playing the doting auntie to Vivienne, huh?

Well, watch closely as I show you just how she's going to die!"

Vivienne turned to Diana. "Die? You really think you've got the chops for that?"

Diana's hatred for Vivienne boiled over. She clenched her fist and punched Vivienne in the stomach

with the force that could take down a mastiff.

Vivienne coughed up blood, but her eyes remained icy as she stared at Diana.

"You're destined to live in my mother's shadow, Diana. You were the one who got her taken away, and

you'll spend your life atoning for it!"

Diana's next punch landed even harder, nearly knocking Vivienne out cold.

It had been a long time since Vivienne had felt such physical pain, and she was unaccustomed to it.

Diana dug her nails into Vivienne's chin, seething. "Listen up, Vivienne. I got rid of Sasha Perez without

a shred of guilt. In fact, I relished it!"

On the sidelines, Zelda's mind raced as she absorbed Diana's words. "What are you saying? Did

Sasha's disappearance have something to do with you?"

Diana laughed chillingly, her contempt clear as she faced Zelda. "Are you always this slow on the

uptake? I thought you'd have figured it out the moment I knocked Vivienne out."

"Diana, what the hell happened?" Zelda shouted, her voice thick with anger.

Zelda had grown up alongside Yuri, and she had a soft spot for Sasha, the little sister she adored.

Diana lounged back, swirling a glass of red wine as if she were on a picnic. "I bet you're dying to know

how your mother was taken from the Perez family, aren't you, Vivienne? Listen well.

It was me. While F-Poison faced off with Sasha, I knocked her out, just like I did with you. I watched F-

Poison take her away. Before they left, I hit her wound viciously, blood staining my favorite dress. A pity

no one wondered why my dress was bloodied."

Vivienne stared at Diana, her body growing weaker.

Zelda, on the other hand, found the strength to lash out at Diana with every curse she knew.

"Diana, do you have any idea how good Sasha was to you? She adored you, and this is how you repay

her? Have you no soul? You were so young, yet so malicious!"

Diana absorbed the insults with indifference. "So what if she was good to me? No matter how good, I

was always overshadowed, never able to shine! Zelda, you were pampered as the Lynette family's

darling, Yuri's childhood sweetheart. What could you possibly understand? You and your caged canary

life, how could you know my pain?"

Zelda was in disbelief. Diana had been treated like a princess by Jasper, yet she spoke as if she had

been dealt the harshest hand.

Diana smirked. "First, it was Sasha. Then Willa. Now you and Vivienne. Next will be your precious

daughters. I'll drive each one out of the Perez family. Remember that."

At the mention of her daughters, Zelda could not hold back. "Diana, Natalia and Yasmine are just kids;

what are you planning? You heartless creature, why don't you just drop dead! Even without Sasha,

you'll never take her place in Dad's heart. You're nothing but a counterfeit!"

Diana responded by smashing her wine glass against Zelda's head, wishing she could mar her face

forever.

F-Poison finally spoke. "Ms. Perez, why such fury? She's still of use to me. Not yet time for her to die."

By then, Vivienne would have taken her last breath, and no one would notice she had replaced Zelda.

The thought alone was exquisitely tantalizing.

F-Poison rose to her feet, sliding a gun into Diana's eager grasp. "Isn't it your burning desire to

personally put an end to Vivienne's life? The pleasure's all yours."

Diana clasped the firearm, lifting it to aim at Vivienne. "Any last words, Vivienne, before we wrap this

up?"

F-Poison was momentarily taken aback, not expecting Vivienne's final flicker of curiosity to center on

her. Read at Dramanovels.com

She let out a dry chuckle. "How to put it? We are one and the same!"

A frown creased Vivienne's brow. One and the same?

At her words, Vivienne let out a scoff, the corners of her mouth curling into a faint, mocking sneer.

Diana was momentarily caught off guard, her eyes soon flaring with intensified loathing.

Just as her finger tensed around the trigger, ready to deliver the final blow, Vivienne's voice thundered

with a desperate plea – "Mom! Save me!"

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With a thunderous bang, Diana's gun fired, but the bullet whizzed past Vivienne's ear, barely grazing a hair.

Unfazed, Vivienne did not even flinch.

Diana, panic-stricken, stared at the figure before her, feeling her wrist trapped as if in an iron vise, pain radiating through her bones like a fracture in progress.

"You... you're Sasha!"

Karen's gaze was heavy, a mix of the strange and the familiar.

She had never imagined that the story behind her kidnapping was so convoluted!

Clenching her fist, Karen threw a punch that landed squarely in Diana's gut with the force of a sledgehammer.

"Touch my daughter, and you're dead meat!"

Diana's punch could take down a full-grown mastiff, but Karen's blow could kill a full-grown bull.

The difference in strength was enormous.

Diana felt as if her insides had been rearranged, her nerves and flesh overwhelmed by pain. It was as if she was about to be ripped apart. The agony was excruciating!

Karen then slapped Diana's face repeatedly, and in no time, Diana's once delicate features swelled up like a balloon.

Diana tried to steady herself, to take another look at her adversary, but her swollen cheeks pressed so tightly against her eyes that they would not open!

Lifting Diana off her feet, Karen's fingers flew, sending needle after needle into Diana's scalp.

"Ah!"

Diana fell to her knees, screaming in torment.

The pain was unbearable!

Rolling on the ground, Diana banged her head against rocks as if the blunt trauma could somehow dull the sharper pain within.

Even as her head was bloodied and bruised, Diana hardly noticed.

Yet, the anger boiling inside Karen was far from quenched.

By now, Vivienne had untied herself. Karen had already neutralized the poison in her system the moment she touched down.

Vivienne moved to Zelda's side, who was still bound, and settled her against a tree before coming to assist Karen.

After all, F-Poison was their next formidable challenge!

F-Poison stood still, watching the display as if enjoying a spectacle.

"You two really do look so alike. I wonder if all daughters look like their mothers." Wearing Gillian's face, she sipped a glass of red wine with a smile, as if the battleground was a social gathering and they were simply old friends reunited.

Karen narrowed her eyes, the silver needles in her hand ready to strike.

Vivienne, too, was on high alert, determined not to let F-Poison slip away again.

"Are you F-Poison?" Karen asked softly, as if in casual conversation, "You seem... younger than I expected."

F-Poison chuckled, caressing her cheek with a soft stroke as if indulging in a moment of vanity.

"Aging isn't easy," she quipped. "This face is all I have left to charm the days away."

With a swift motion, F-Poison ripped off her mask and flung it towards Karen and Vivienne, the skin transforming mid-air into a whirling blade aimed at Vivienne's heart.

"Frost!"

Vivienne ducked, narrowly missing the skin-blade, and kicked a few rocks towards F-Poison.

Stepping the airborne stones to gain momentum, Karen accelerated, grabbing a rock and turning it into a projectile. With a burst of energy, she hurled it towards F-Poison with lethal precision.

The skin-blade buried itself in the tree where Vivienne had been tied, while the rock pierced F-Poison's thigh, embedding itself in the ground and creating a small crater.

Blood seeped from F-Poison's wound, and Karen's breaths grew uneven.

Just as Vivienne was about to unleash her poison, Karen raised a hand to stop her.

Vivienne paused, sensing something invisible in the air—particles that could trigger a violent explosion upon contact with poison. It was the reason Karen held back.

"F-Poison, there's no escape now!"

Karen and Vivienne stood side by side, united against their foe.

F-Poison, clutching her wounded leg, threw down a smoke grenade.

Shielding their eyes from the smoke, Karen and Vivienne quickly traced F-Poison's escape route.

As the smoke cleared, they saw F-Poison holding Zelda at the cliff's edge, a hostage in her grasp.

"You both might overpower me together, but with this hostage, what can you really do?" F-Poison

taunted, gripping Zelda's neck tightly, ready to snap it at any moment.

Then, from above, the sound of a helicopter's rotors sliced through the air.

Vivienne smiled faintly. "F-Poison, would you rather go up or down? Either way, I can accommodate you."

From the helicopter, Percival aimed his machine gun—not at F-Poison, but at Zelda!

F-Poison took a step back, pebbles tumbling down the cliff into the abyss below, but no echo came.

Clearly, the height of this cliff was immeasurable.

"You're cornered. Surrender now!" Karen stood protectively in front of Vivienne, resolute and formidable.

Karen frowned. Over a decade ago?

Could it be the "Destruction Plan"?

But F-Poison looked barely older than Vivienne—how old was she back then?

A child trained to grow into this role by GTO?

Vivienne, too, was puzzled, feeling that perhaps F-Poison was not the person before them at all.

No matter the gender, Belle always called F-Poison "Mom"!

The person standing before Vivienne had a youthful face, but the rest of her physique showed no signs of aging.

That was why Vivienne had to ask whether F-Poison was just a code name or something more.

With that, F-Poison swiftly twisted Zelda's neck. Content of Dramanovels.com

But the expected limpness of broken bones did not occur.

Instead, Zelda's body became even more rigid!

At this moment, F-Poison realized with alarm that she was dealing with a bionic robot!

Preparing to make a hasty retreat off the cliff, F-Poison was caught off guard by the sound of a gunshot.

"You!" F-Poison struggled but could not break free.

Vivienne let out a cold laugh. "Did you think you were the only one using bionics?"

Karen gave Vivienne a thumbs-up. "Impressive, you've done your homework."

"You taught me well," Vivienne signaled up to Percival in the sky.

Chapter 607

The helicopter descended slowly, and Percival leaped from the aircraft, for once not immediately

rushing to Vivienne's side but instead locking eyes with his mentor.

In an instant, the area was swarmed by the special squad agents of the Vanguard Agency.

F-Poison, bound by a robot, was being escorted to the helicopter.

She struggled briefly, her face devoid of emotion. "The family reunion over there. Have you really

decided this is the end?"

Percival instinctively shielded Vivienne and Karen behind him, eyes wary as he watched F-Poison.

F-Poison let out a mocking laugh, and the expressions on Karen and Vivienne's faces changed in

unison.

"Get down!"

As their words rang out, explosions erupted around them, igniting a towering inferno!

"Percival! Madam, Captain, are you alright?"

Thomas's voice bellowed through the flames.

Percival was shielding Vivienne and Karen beneath him, his back already scorched by the fire. "Put out

the fire first!"

Thomas quickly organized a firefighting effort. Fortunately, they were on a mountaintop, and the wind was not strong; their prompt response prevented a wildfire.

Leopold arrived with the third squad, first helping the injured to safety before searching the crowd for Vivienne.

"Vivienne! Are you okay? You have to be okay! Otherwise, other disciples will have my head! Vivienne!"

Vivienne was sitting nearby, irritated by Leopold's wailing.

With a flick of her wrist, she chucked a stone at him. "Shut up already!"

Leopold felt the stone hit his leg, and he scrambled toward the voice, relieved to find Vivienne with just some superficial cuts.

"Vivienne, you scared me to death! Thank goodness you're fine, or I'd never be able to face the master or our brothers!"

Leopold lunged for a hug, but Percival kicked him aside.

Percival thought, "Dream on about hugging my Vivienne!"

Vivienne muttered, "Thankfully, you kicked him away in time, or I would've had to make him sing soprano with a needle!"

Leopold blinked, gazing at the woman before him, and rubbed his eyes in disbelief.

Karen watched Leopold, pinched his cheek, and scolded, "After all these years, you haven't changed a bit. You're just asking to be hit!"

Leopold's voice broke, and then he howled.

"Oh, Captain! My dear, respected, and beautiful Captain! You're alive! This is amazing!

Captain, you have no idea how this heartbreaker, Percival, has been bullying me over the years! Waah, it's so good to have you back. I've finally got backup!"

Thomas turned away, unable to watch Leopold's disgraceful display.

Soren, who had arrived much later than the others and did not know Karen, clenched his fists in secondhand embarrassment.

Anna was the first who could not stand it anymore and tossed Leopold out by the collar.

Then she stood before Karen, examining her closely.

Karen had seen Anna's photo with her mother, Daphne, both in Vanguard Agency uniforms, their hair in

neat ponytails, the agency's flag waving behind them.

Karen looked up at Anna and playfully tapped her nose.

"You must be Anna, right? I'm Karen, your mother's friend."

Anna's eyes welled up, feeling the touch on her nose, and tears fell as she choked up.

"Ms. Karen."

Karen held Anna's hand, gently rubbing her fingers. "I named you, you know. If your mother could see how beautiful you've grown, she'd be so happy."

Daphne was Karen's most trusted lieutenant. They had survived death together and were forced to part ways.

Only when Daphne was in labor did Karen appear to deliver Anna, caring for her for three days before they had to separate again.

Tragically, by the time they heard from each other again, it was too late.

Anna wiped her tears and saluted Karen. "Rivenwood Vanguard Agency headquarters, special squad third team member Anna reporting!"

Karen smiled warmly, remembering Daphne's early days in the team and seeing such a resemblance in Anna.

"Alright, we'll catch up properly when we get back. Report to your Captain first," Karen said, patting Anna's shoulder with tenderness.

Anna nodded and reported to Thomas. "Captain, the site has been surveyed. F-Poison is confirmed missing, and the remains at the scene are fake!"

Thomas frowned, glancing involuntarily at Percival.

Percival, however, was completely absorbed in tending to Vivienne's scraped fingers, the result of his haste to protect her.

Thomas pressed his lips to speak, but Percival was ahead of him.

"We shouldn't linger here. We'll be off now. No need to see us out." Percival helped Vivienne to her feet.

"Oh, and Captain Thomas, we'll be taking this... this piece of trash with us," He said as he pointed at Diana on the ground.

Karen chuckled softly, leaning towards Thomas with a conspiratorial twinkle in her eye. "Cause of the

explosion, body parts, escape route!"

Thomas had a moment of realization and said, "Right, thanks, Captain!"

Percival frowned subtly, murmuring to Karen, "Master, aren't you babysitting them a bit too much?"

With a swift motion, Karen smacked the back of Percival's head. "You were no different when you started! Needed every bit of guidance I had to offer."

Percival found himself speechless, his arms wrapped around Vivienne as he helped Karen down the trail.

The rest of the team, including Thomas, watched in disbelief.

That was Percival's head she had swatted – how many dared to lay a hand on his head? Content of

Dramanovels.com

Thomas, Leopold, and Soren exchanged knowing looks.

Spot on!

Vivienne sat there, glancing sideways at Karen, and for a fleeting moment, reality seemed to blur.

She could hardly believe it – her mother, absent for over a decade, was genuinely, tangibly here.

All the past resentments, the frustration of being teased, and the sense of being toyed with – all evaporated.

What remained was an overwhelming yearning for her mother!

Karen spread her arms wide, a warm smile on her face as she beckoned to her precious daughter,

"Frost, come here for a hug!"

Chapter 608

Clutching her mother tightly, Vivienne's tears erupted like a fountain. She wept uninhibited, her sobs echoing through the car like a child's.

In her mother's embrace, time seemed to stand still. It was different from the time she had swindled

Finnian out of 80 million dollars; this was raw, unfiltered emotion.

After crying herself to near exhaustion, Vivienne finally ceased her tears and remembered she had a bone to pick with her mother.

"Mom, you..." Vivienne started but stopped as she noticed Karen dozing against the car window.

How could any mother be so absent? She was crying her eyes out!

"Vivienne, honey?" Karen murmured, waking to her daughter's voice and wiping drool from her chin.

"Oh, it's been ages since I heard you cry. Still puts me right to sleep."

Vivienne was speechless, gazing intensely at her mother, who seemed so different from when she had first seen Anna.

"Mom!"

Karen pulled Vivienne into a hug. "Frost, I'm starved. How about we grab some beef stew before we get into all that?"

Overhearing from outside, Percival could not bear the scene any longer and climbed into the car. He had hoped for a heartwarming reunion, yet Karen's mind was preoccupied with thoughts of beef stew!

Now he knew where Vivienne got her appetite.

"Master, is food all you ever think about?" Percival complained as he got into the car. Vivienne had been crying her heart out, and Karen had not even tried to comfort her.

Karen slapped Percival's arm. "Shut it and drive."

"Mom, please don't knock the sense out of my Mr. Wolf," Vivienne said, rubbing the back of Percival's head tenderly.

Percival chuckled softly, grateful for Vivienne's gentle touch.

Karen scoffed. "It's not like you peed on him when you were a kid!"

Vivienne blushed crimson, having no memory of such an incident.

Percival was about to retort when Karen continued, "Or the time you cried about diapers and not wanting to break the rule of 'no touching between the sexes.'"

That settled it; Karen always had the last word.

They ended up at Rivenwood's finest stew house, where Karen feasted to her heart's content. It was then that she circled back to the matter at hand.

"The F-Poison at the scene was a bionic robot, an android," Karen said, reclining in her chair and rubbing her belly without a care in the world.

Vivienne sipped her soda and burped. "I tossed that rock to check if she was an android. Never thought I'd get fooled."

Percival handed the pair wet wipes, pondering quietly. "It only shows the androids inside GTO are evolving just like ours."

The androids, now enhanced by the Brooks family and the two samples Karen had left behind, had reached their highest version.

"Zelda" at the scene was the pinnacle of these experiments—an android being capable of connecting with human thoughts.

This android was given to Vivienne by Zachary Churchill just last month.

GTO had made no progress for years, but now they could match the highest version?

Vivienne's brows knitted. "It seems we have a mole among us again."

She had been too focused on finding Karen to check on Zachary, William Pendleton, or the Brooks family. She thought they had found the mole, but that was clearly not the case.

Karen folded her used wipe neatly on the table. "There's definitely a leak, but a mole is unlikely.

Without Scott Brooks, the Brooks family is clean, and Baron has long retired. Maybe it's time to look elsewhere, like new contacts they might have made."

Vivienne nodded. "Right. With Scott gone, the Brooks family has been under surveillance. No issues there, and the Churchill and Pendleton families are out of the question."

"And the explosion," Karen added. "Because of the airborne particles, we couldn't risk using any chemicals. Even Percival's shot wouldn't have set them off."

Percival, returning after settling the bill, caught the tail end of the conversation. "The gun barrel."

"Exactly. When Vanguard Agency showed up, their gunshots sounded muffled. I thought they'd switched guns. Could it be Vance again?" Karen propped her chin on her hand, tapping her cheek in thought.

When Percival turned around and saw Vivienne in the same posture as Karen, he frowned even deeper.

He sighed, "Master, Vivienne, why don't we head home and think this through?"

At the mention of home, Karen seemed lost.

The Perez family must be in chaos now.

Karen was not ready to face Jasper, not after everything. It was only because Diana had pushed Vivienne to the brink that she had emerged from hiding.

Reading her mother's hesitation, Vivienne reached out and took Karen's hand. "Mom, let's go home."

Vivienne knew that Karen didn't really care much for the term 'family.' In fact, she was downright resistant to it.

No matter how strong a person is, there is always a tender scar hidden away deep inside.

For a long time, Karen had lived in a state of isolation, building walls so high that she would not let anyone close.

Now, with the revelation that she had blood relatives who had been searching for her for over thirty years, the prospect of getting close was even more daunting.

"Mom, Grandpa's waiting for us," Vivienne said, her hand warm in Karen's—a comfort akin to the cozy sweaters her mother used to wrap her in.

Yet, Karen had never really felt her daughter grow up.

Until this moment, when she deeply felt it—her baby girl had truly matured, capable of standing on her own.

Even capable of leading the way home. Read at Dramanovels.com

Karen nodded. "Okay, let's go home."

Percival dropped the two off at the Perez Mansion, choosing not to intrude.

He understood that at a moment like this, the Perez family would likely prefer not to have outsiders around.

Her previous visits as Vesper had allowed her to become accustomed to the surroundings.

Yet now, standing there, hearing the symphony of pots and pans from inside, she found herself hesitating to step forward.

Vivienne lovingly linked her arm through Karen's. "Mom, today, I'm coming home too."

For the first time, she was returning as the granddaughter, coming home.

Chapter 609

Karen chuckled softly, squeezing Vivienne's hand before pushing open the grand oak gate of the Perez Mansion.

As the door swung open, Karen's gaze fell upon an elderly figure leaning on a cane, clad in a smart tweed suit reminiscent of a bygone era. Tears brimmed in his eyes as he stood there, looking out as if in disbelief.

With the door now ajar, he stumbled forward a couple of steps, his body trembling, pausing as if unsure whether to believe this was all real.

It had been over thirty years. His little treasure, who had barely reached his waistline back then, was now a mother herself.

Karen stepped forward, stopping a yard away from Jasper, feeling the gulf of years between them - not

a chasm of estrangement, but one of deep regret.

Thankfully, all was not lost; she had returned.

With a thud, Karen knelt on the ground, bowing her head deeply before Jasper.

"Dad, Sasha's come back."

Jasper could no longer contain himself. He hurried forward, his cane discarded, hunching over as he

helped his daughter to her feet.

Slowly, his wrinkled hands reached out, caressing Karen's face gently as if afraid of inflicting any pain

upon his cherished daughter.

Every contour of her face, every familiar line and curve, he touched as if reacquainting himself with a

long-lost treasure.

"Sasha, my Sasha, oh, my Sasha..."

With a choked sob, Jasper pulled Karen into a tight embrace. "My precious girl."

Meanwhile, Zelda had already sought refuge in Yuri's arms, sobbing uncontrollably, and even the

usually nonchalant Maddox was crouched on the ground, wiping away tears.

Vivienne stood at the threshold, unwilling to intrude on the heartfelt reunion.

Jasper and Karen held each other for what seemed like an eternity before they finally composed themselves.

Karen, ever the comforter, gently reminded Jasper, "Dad, tomorrow is the ninth of the month. Let's go inside. And remember, no leaving the house tomorrow."

Jasper's mind clicked - it dawned on him that Vesper, who had once saved him, was actually Sasha!

"You little rascal, why didn't you reveal yourself sooner? You've been through so much hardship. Do you have any idea how worried I was when I saw the explosion on that cliff?"

Jasper and his family had watched the ordeal unfold through "Zelda's" robotic surrogate via a live feed.

When Diana had raised a stone to Vivienne, Jasper had nearly rallied a posse to storm over, but

Maddox and Yuri had managed to restrain him just in time.

The cliff side explosion had nearly sent him through the screen, but a timely signal from Percival had assured him of their safety and calmed his nerves.

Vivienne, trailing behind, tried to remain silent.

But how could Jasper let her off the hook?

"And you, young lady, you're no less of a worry! Always giving your grandfather gray hairs!"

Vivienne cracked a smile. "Grandpa, blame my mom. She's been 'dead' for so many years. If I hadn't given her this little scare today, she'd still be in hiding!"

"Cheeky girl, no wonder your master always speaks ill of you!" Karen shot back, though her eyes were devoid of any real reproach.

Speaking of Finnian, Jasper suddenly remembered. "Sasha, how on earth did you end up with that old madman?"

Karen helped Jasper to a chair and began to recount her tale.

"I don't quite remember the details, but when I came to, I was with another family. I met Finnian during school. He said I had a unique talent and wanted to take me on as an apprentice. I went along with it for fun and never officially took the pledge. Eventually, I joined Vanguard Agency and got involved with more advanced work, and my thoughts kept drifting to bionics and synthetics, and here we are."

Jasper nodded in understanding. "No wonder you sent Vivienne to Emerald Mountain. You were leaving her in your master's care as a playful bargain."

Karen waved dismissively. "Not quite. He insisted I bring a bottle of whiskey as a token of apprenticeship. I was too stingy, so I promised him my future child instead. Had no choice!"

Vivienne finally caught on. No wonder Finnian always joked about her being a lousy deal – she was traded for a bottle of whiskey!

Maddox could not help but laugh. "Niece, you're not even worth a bottle of whiskey! Come and stay with your uncle. Your mom isn't reliable at all!"

Vivienne didn't take offense. Instead, she narrowed her eyes at Maddox, replying, "Uncle Maddox, my mom has been with Aunt Willa, you know."

Maddox's laughter stopped abruptly as if he had bitten his tongue. He quickly sidled up to Karen, the traces of tears still visible at the corners of his eyes, his voice tinged with concern.

"Sasha, were you really with Willa? How is she? Is she eating well? Has she lost weight? Is she sleeping okay? Does she dress warmly? Has she been hurt?"

The barrage of questions took Karen aback. Though she had been with Willa all this time, Willa never once mentioned Maddox.

She didn't realize how deep the connection between her brother and Willa was.

Karen glanced at Vivienne, who silently nodded her confirmation.

"Yes, Mom, it's as you suspect – your brother is hopelessly in love."

Maddox felt a chill run down his spine and turned to Vivienne, insisting. "It's true love!"

Yuri rolled his eyes in disgust, pushing Maddox aside and moving closer to Karen. "Sasha, Maddox has been pining over Willa for over a decade. He's beyond help."

Karen clicked her tongue. "Maddox, did you scare Willa away? Is that why she left?"

Jasper nodded sagely. "That sounds about right."

Maddox was quick to defend himself. "No way! It was Diana who..."

Even if the entire Perez family harbored animosity towards Diana, Jasper was her steadfast protector, ensuring she never suffered a moment's distress.

Anyone who dared to mock Diana for being adopted would find Jasper on their doorstep, ready to confront them.

Truth be told, before Maddox discovered that Diana might have tampered with Vivienne's paternity test, he had not particularly disliked her either.

Whenever Diana faced bullying, her four brothers would rally around her, a united front.

But who would have thought this act of kindness would breed such an ingrate? Read at

Dramanovels.com

A heavy silence fell over the group, and Yuri shot Maddox an annoyed look for his blabbering.

Maddox, in a moment of urgency, had simply forgotten to filter his words given the circumstances.

It was then that Vivienne chimed in, "I'm starving."

Vivienne chuckled. "Then I guess I'll be counting on Grandpa and Uncles to feed me from now on."

"Ha! That's the spirit! I will take care of you!" Jasper beamed at Vivienne and Karen; his spirits lifted considerably.

And so, the subject of Diana was tactfully set aside, leaving behind only the warmth of family harmony.

Chapter 610

Not far off, Willa sat pensively atop a stone wall, her eyes fixed on the joyous scene unfurling in the

Perez family's backyard. The guilt that had clung to her heart was finally dissolving, bit by bit.

Watching Jasper's face brighten with laughter, a smile unwittingly crept across Willa's lips.

Just like Diana, Willa had always known she was adopted.

As a child, she had longed to call Jasper "Dad" just like Diana did, but for some reason, the words

never came easily.

But deep down, she was certain there was only one man in her heart who could ever take the place of a father, and that was Jasper Perez.

It was not until she unraveled the mystery of her past that she understood the source of her discomfort.

Willa had resolved then and there to bring Sasha back home, to gift Jasper with one genuine, wholehearted laugh.

Now, at last, that wish had come to fruition.

Gradually, Willa's gaze shifted to Maddox. She watched him clutch his head in a comical display of distress and couldn't help but chuckle.

That guy, no matter what life threw at him, never changed!

Willa lingered on the wall for a while longer before slowly getting up, ready to leave.

Suddenly, she caught Karen's meaningful glance from afar. Despite the distance, she knew Karen was looking straight at her.

With a resigned shake of her head, Willa realized Sasha had caught on.

She pulled out her phone and shot Karen a text, [I'll be home waiting. Spend some quality time with Jasper.]

Jasper had a long talk with Karen, eager to catch up on all the years gone by. Karen summarized the events, omitting her time with her foster family and simply mentioning that her foster parents had passed away, leaving out the rest.

Towards the end of their conversation, Jasper glanced over at Vivienne playing with Natalia and Yasmine and asked, "Sasha, who exactly is Vivienne's father?"

Karen knew this question was inevitable and didn't shy away from it, but she also was not ready to reveal too much.

"Dad, all I can tell you is he's the bravest, most remarkable man in the world, my true love. Our separation has always been due to our careers, not because of any problems between us. He's no heartbreaker."

Listening to Karen's description, Jasper felt a bittersweet pang in his heart, as if his little girl had grown up and been taken away by some young rascal.

Now, if Percival was rascal number two, then this unknown son-in-law was number one!

"Is he really as great as you say?" Jasper still harbored some doubts.

Karen raised an eyebrow smugly. "Indeed, it takes a special man to win your daughter's heart, to make me willingly bear his children."

Reassured by Karen's conviction, Jasper felt at ease. "Alright then, he'd better at least measure up to that Ellington boy, or else I won't be satisfied."

"I promise he's even better!"

Just then, Vivienne called out, "Mom, no badmouthing Mr. Wolf behind my back!"

Karen clicked her tongue and helped Jasper to his feet. "See what I mean? Girls grow up so fast. Dad, let me take you to rest. It's getting late."

Jasper was reluctant to sleep, but he could not fight off the drowsiness. After some more chit-chat, he finally drifted off to sleep.

Stepping out of the bedroom, Natalia and Yasmine had already called it a night, leaving just the adults sitting in the yard.

Maddox tossed a can of beer to his sister as she emerged.

Karen caught it with one hand and took a seat next to Zelda, Vivienne by her side.

Cracking open a can, Maddox initiated a toast, "Sasha, you owe me this drink, remember?"

Karen had indeed forgotten, but Maddox's reminder triggered a vague memory.

It was New Year's when Karen was nine, and Maddox had just turned sixteen, eager to mimic the adults and have a drink.

Karen had threatened to join him, which led to Jasper catching them and Maddox getting a beating.

Back then, Karen had said, "Maddox, I'll drink with you when I'm eighteen!"

Memory fuzzy, Karen simply raised her can, "Maddox, cheers!"

The group clinked their cans together, beer spilling over the edges, unable to contain their collective joy and excitement.

After taking a sip, Yuri looked at his sister with concern, "Sasha, do you really not remember anything from our childhood? What's the reason? Was it because of the injury Diana caused?"

Karen shook her head. "It's not that. While I did have a head injury, it was not fatal, and I could heal myself. I have recovered, or else I wouldn't have come up with the bionic tech. There must be other reasons I haven't discovered yet."

Vivienne leaned against Karen's shoulder. "Could it be that GTO gave you some kind of drug that damaged your neural pathways, making it hard to remember the past?"

"That's a possibility, but what kind of drug could neither you nor I counter?"

It was indeed a puzzle for the ages.

Anything that could stump both Karen and Vivienne was exceedingly rare.

"Sasha, do you know the origins of GTO?" Yuri inquired.

"That's right, I remember the case file mentioned F-Poison was into human trafficking for experiments to develop a virus. Could it be you were part of those experiments?"

Vivienne's eyes widened in surprise. She had always thought those potions were deadly toxins brewed by Karen herself!

"In a way, you could say I did create them. I simply picked up where their experiments left off. Nobody clued us in on what the potion was ultimately meant for, so I followed my gut. Turns out, I was onto something big and GTO took notice. If Scott had not uncovered my true identity, I might have taken down their whole operation by now." Updated at Dramanovels.com

As she spoke, Karen took a swig of her beer, the bitterness of missed opportunities lingering on her tongue.

Zelda chuckled. "You haven't changed a bit since we were kids."

"Neither have you, Zelda. Still as glued to Yuri as ever!" Karen teased with a smirk.

Zelda's cheeks flushed a bright pink. "You're supposed to have forgotten all about those days. How do you still remember to tease me?"

"It was Maddox who told me!" Karen shot back with a grin.

"Yeah, I can vouch for that. It was all Uncle Maddox's doing!" Vivienne added.

Maddox snorted. "What? What does it have to do with me?"

Yuri shrugged. "Can't help it. It always comes back to you to take the heat when Luke isn't around!"