

Million-Dollar 651

Chapter 651

Gillian slouched pathetically between two chairs, her eyes pleading for sympathy. Vance and Micah stood behind her, shaking their heads in silence before circling around to face her.

"Gillian, the surveillance caught what you did. You've been flagged as the prime suspect, and when the higher-ups get here, you'll have to explain yourself."

Gillian clutched her face in feigned innocence. "I have no idea what you're talking about! Besides, I can't even see this supposed surveillance you're mentioning. How can I be sure you're not just framing me? And I'll have you know, I'm pressing charges against Vivienne for this mess. She won't get away with what she did to me!"

Vivienne snorted with laughter and pulled a packet from her bag, tossing a facial mask onto Gillian's face.

The moment it touched her skin, Gillian let out a squeal like a pig being slaughtered. Miraculously, her face returned to normal, not a single mark to be seen.

Then, Vivienne shoved the footage in front of her. "This is you, right?"

Gillian nodded. "Yes, that's me, but I was just checking the screens at the command console. It's my job to keep records. Is that a crime now?"

With a swift motion, Vivienne slapped Gillian across the face.

It wasn't just for the sake of it—her palm was itching for justice!

The slap left Gillian's cheek swelling even more than before, ballooning up instantly.

"That's your problem to explain!" Vivienne said with disdain, handing over the tablet to Micah. "I'll be waiting for the outcome." With that, Vivienne turned on her heel and walked away.

Gillian scrambled toward the door, only to be tripped up by Micah's cane, which "accidentally" landed on her already fractured ankle.

"Ah!" she cried out, pain knocking her out cold.

When she came to, she found herself in a hospital ward—the genuine patient this time, with doctors who wouldn't dream of turning her away.

After some treatment, Gillian could finally see clearly again.

"Director, | really don't remember what happened. | hit my head on some equipment, and | still can't recall what happened. It wasn't me."

Gillian was a slobbering mess, insisting on her innocence.

Vance nodded along. "I hear you. You're new here, still wet behind the ears. It's normal to make a mistake now and then. My daughter is younger than you and always messing up. | get it."

Her hope restored by Vance's words, Gillian's lips curled into a smile. "So, you believe me, Director?"

Vance kept nodding. "Of course, | believe you, Gillian. You're a gem at the Vanguard Agency. If | can't trust you, who can | trust?" Wiping her tears, Gillian beamed. "I knew you'd believe me, Director. Oh, my head's spinning."

To sell her story, she added an extra swoon for good measure.

Vance sighed. "Alright, Gillian. | understand your condition. From now on, Sophia will handle all of Vanguard's work. You're off

duty." The words left Gillian stunned. Was Vance stripping her of her authority? Headquarters sent her; Vance had no right to do this! "Director, |..."

"That's enough. Rest up. The headquarters has sent an investigative team. Just cooperate with them, and don't worry. I believe you, and so does everyone else here!"

Vance's words were firm, his belief in her seemingly unshakable.

But for Gillian, her days of pulling strings at the Rivenwood Vanguard Agency were over.

As Vance left, the shock was evident on Gillian's face.

She had paid a high price to infiltrate Rivenwood Vanguard Agency, and now Vance dismissed her with just a few words? No sooner had Vance exited than the Sea City main office's investigation team entered, taking Gillian away for questioning. With the gravity of the situation, she would be detained for a while. What would happen next was anyone's guess.

After all, if the daughter of a notorious drug dealer could infiltrate Vanguard Agency as a secretary from headquarters, what else was possible?

Outside the hospital, Vivienne watched Gillian being led away, still feeling a knot of unresolved anger. If Gillian dared to return to Rivenwood Vanguard Agency, Vivienne would ensure it was a one-way trip.

"Vivienne, Dracon's been found," Percival approached.

The spy base affair was now in the hands of the International Intelligence Bureau, and with Gillian taken in for questioning, there was still one more player to deal with—the man at the heart of it all, Dracon, who had Benjamin sell those cameras.

He targeted bionic biotech, a market F-Poison had dipped into before with their synthetic robots. It wouldn't be a stretch to think Dracon was involved.

"Let me go! Do you know who I am? Do you know who my father is? Touch me, and you'll regret it, I swear! You'd better release me now, or I'll raze this place to the ground!"

Dracon was shackled in a dim basement, his hollow threats echoing off the walls.

He learned of Benjamin's mishap the same day and knew his exposure was imminent. He fled on the first flight out, hoping to lay low.

But as soon as he disembarked, he was hooded, stunned, and carried off before he could even register what was happening. When he awoke, he was bound in this dark chamber. Suddenly, the basement flooded with light, blinding and disorienting Dracon.

His ordeal was just beginning. It took what felt like an eternity before he could muster the courage to open his eyes again, and when he did, he was greeted by a 1000-watt bulb blazing so bright it nearly blinded him.

"Who the hell are you? Who?" Dracon bellowed, the frustration in his voice palpable.

Aghostly male voice, thin as a whisper from the underworld, drifted to his ears. "Dracon, who gave you the order to have Sean sell the Brooks Group's cameras?"

Dracon jumped, tumbling chair and all to the floor. "Ah! Who are you? Who?"

The voice, unrelenting, pressed on, pushing against Dracon's throbbing head, turning his world from pitch black to blinding white, rendering him unable to see clearly.

In his extreme terror, Dracon started to blabber, "It was Gillian! We despised Vivienne and wanted to sabotage her bionic tech ventures. Gillian wanted to reclaim the patents. | wanted to see Vivienne suffer, and yes, | used my dad's influence to get Gillian into the Rivenwood Vanguard Agency. That's all | know, now get lost! Get out of here!"

After spilling his guts, the voice vanished as suddenly as it had appeared, and the room's light slowly returned to normal. Dracon waited a full ten minutes before he dared to open his eyes once more. To his horror, his father was sitting right in front of him, his face twisted with rage.

Squirming on the floor like a worm, Dracon pleaded, "Dad, please, you gotta help me! Save me, Dad, please!"

Chapter 652

Yorick Linklater squinted his eyes, truly oblivious to the fact that his most well-behaved son had been stirring up such trouble behind his back.

To think his son had even ventured into the black market, exploiting his privileges! He had surely underestimated this wretched boy!

The next moment, Yorick's boot connected viciously with Dracon's jaw, nearly shattering it. "You beast, shut your mouth! Worthless trash!"

Dracon was in too much pain to speak. Yorick, tired of the spectacle, settled back into his chair. "Percival, come in." Percival stepped through the door, his steely gaze briefly sweeping over the maggot writhing on the floor. "Yorick."

"This mess is my fault for not keeping a tighter leash. I'll cover all the losses the Brooks family has suffered. Go back and tell Vivienne not to fret about the bionic tech incident. I'll look into it discreetly. As for F-Poison, we're blind until she surfaces again."

Percival was of the same mind. "Understood."

Yorick exhaled deeply, producing a contract. "Take this as compensation for Vivienne and the Brooks family. We'll address the losses separately."

Percival scanned the document—it was an international business contract. Without lifting a finger, they'd rake in thirty billion dollars a year.

He pocketed the contract unceremoniously. Vivienne, the little money-hoarder, would probably forgive all his transgressions at the sight of it!

"Yorick, I'll take my leave then." Percival grinned, knowing full well that Dracon was not his problem to handle. With Dracon silenced by Yorick and Gillian taken away for investigation, it seemed peace would reign, at least for a while.

Matthew held the contract with a grin that threatened to split his face. Thirty billion dollars! That was his salary for three whole years! Now, with this windfall, he could certainly petition Vivienne for a bonus.

Percival shook his head at the sight of Matthew's glee, musing how he mirrored Vivienne's expression when it came to money. No wonder Leopold pinched pennies like no other—it was an Emerald Mountain tradition!

"Achoo!" Leopold sneezed so violently as soon as he woke up that he nearly tore his sutures.

Griffin rushed to steady him. "Didn't I tell you to take it easy? Are you trying to undo your stitches? Do you have any idea how many wounds you have?"

Griffin had been a constant presence at the hospital, forgoing sleep to watch over Leopold. Now that he was awake, her eyes were nearly swollen shut from worry.

"I'm fine. It's got to be Percival badmouthing me behind my back—why else would I be sneezing?" Leopold protested, propped up in bed, swathed in bandages, his only mobility in his restless eyes. "Griffin, you didn't tell my folks, did you?"

Griffin shook her head. "No. Dad mentioned your father's not been well; didn't want to worry him." Leopold relaxed. "Good. They'd be fretting over nothing. Ow, I'm starving. Is Soren awake yet?"

Griffin, balancing a thermos of food, replied while feeding Leopold, "Still out. Anna's with him. Don't worry, Vivienne said it's just the anesthesia—he'll wake up later."

Leopold chewed his meal, nodding in agreement. "Yeah, with Vivienne and Boss on it, he'll be fine. No worries."

Despite his nonchalance, Leopold's eyes darted toward the door.

Griffin, understanding his concern, fetched a wheelchair and helped Leopold to Soren's room.

"You guys aren't usually this chummy. Can't it wait?" Griffin fretted over Leopold's injuries.

"I just need some fresh air," Leopold grumbled.

They arrived at Soren's room to find Karen and Vivienne chatting outside. Vivienne frowned at Leopold. "Who let you out?" "Just getting some fresh air. How's Soren? Still out cold?" Leopold complained.

Vivienne knew Leopold all too well. "Anna's with him. Just take a peek from here."

Leopold was baffled. "What's wrong with Anna being there? Let me check on her."

As he maneuvered the wheelchair forward, Griffin held it back. "Vivienne and Cordelia are staying out here. You can see from the window!"

Leopold looked puzzled but complied, peering through the glass.

Inside, Anna sat in a chair, tenderly wiping Soren's face with a damp cloth. Her motions were gentle, her gaze soft and caring. Leopold gasped.

What in the world? When did this happen?

They used to bicker nonstop, and now they seemed deeply connected.

Was that really Anna? It had to be!

Griffin, on the other hand, wore a knowing smile. "Anna and Soren are a good match. They might seem cold on the outside, but they're both tender-hearted where it counts."

"Tender-hearted?" Leopold looked up in surprise. "There must be a reason. Did Soren save Anna's life or something?"

Karen nodded. "Sort of. We heard from the team that Soren gave her his last life-saving pill, and she found out." Leopold finally felt reassured. "I thought so. And here I've been rooting for Kenneth. | can't let Soren get the upper hand!" Speak of the devil, Kenneth arrived just in time.

Armed with a bouquet, a collection of thoughtfully chosen gifts, and an assortment of health supplements, Kenneth stood behind the crowd, peering through the glass at how tenderly Anna was caring for Soren.

"Hey Vivienne, when Anna comes out, hand her these things for me, will ya? | gotta run, but tell her to take it easy. I'll swing by tomorrow to check on her."

Kenneth had been coming by daily, but Anna had been unconscious, blissfully unaware of his presence.

Today, as soon as she woke up and learned about the life-saving pill Soren had given her, she rushed to Soren's room, completely neglecting the flowers in her room and who had sent them.

Vivienne was at a loss for words, left only with a sigh — my little girl is all grown up now! But who to choose?

Kenneth was from a good family, handsome, Percival's brother, a renowned E-sports player with means and money — not a bad catch.

Soren, an orphan, had worked his way up through sheer determination and was Percival's most trusted man, a keystone of the Vanguard Agency — he wasn't a bad option either.

Oh, the dilemma.

Karen saw right through her daughter's thoughts and lightly tapped her on the head, "Don't you worry your head about it. But remember to convey Kenneth's feelings to Anna."

Vivienne nodded in acknowledgment. "Got it."

"And Vivienne, you've got to tell Anna about Kenneth. That boy has been courting her for ages. We can't let Soren, the old rascal, take advantage of the situation. We don't need her to follow in your footsteps!"

No sooner had the words left her mouth than Leopold felt a chill run down his spine.

Without daring to look back, he grabbed Griffin's hand. "Run, run, Percival's here, run for our lives!"

Chapter 653

Griffin fretted that Percival might actually break Leopold in two, so she quickly wheeled his chair away from the scene. Percival glanced in the direction the pair had escaped.

"Fine," he thought, "Someday I'll show 'em some old-school roughhousing!"

"Mr. Wolf, any luck running into Kenneth?" Vivienne strolled up and asked.

Suddenly inspired, she considered creating a new fragrance, a companion to the "Old Man" scent—calling it "Old Ruffian". Percival nodded. "Yeah, he looked pretty down, not even watching where he was going."

"Ah, to be young again." Karen chuckled.

After a brief discussion outside the ward about Dracon and Gillian's situation, the group was about to head out for a meal when Karen's cell phone rang.

It was Willa Perez. Ever since Karen had returned to the Perez family, Willa had been conspicuously absent.

Karen had tried to reach out a few times, but Willa's obsession ran deep; she wanted to track down F-Poison before returning to the Perez family.

Karen respected that. Willa had her own path to follow.

The unexpected message from Willa now piqued Karen's curiosity.

The text contained a photo of a university gate abroad.

That very university was where Flynn had studied overseas—the same place F-Poison had once been. Karen took a deep breath. "Willa's on to F-Poison's trail. Hopefully, she digs up some leads."

In Scepter Country, Willa stared at the university's gate and strode through with determination.

The campus was alive with the vigor of youth.

Every student, regardless of gender, wore bright smiles as if nourished by honey.

Willa, clad in a black leather jacket, walked across the field, her attire clashing with the sundresses and t-shirts around her. Thankfully, the freedom of college fashion spared her any undue attention.

Only a few whistle-blowing guys, intrigued by Willa's cool demeanor, hesitated to approach.

She walked on, ignoring all the signals around her, and headed straight for a war memorial.

There, a monument stood in memory of a shooting that had occurred years before.

Engraved with names from around the world, the monument bore inscriptions in multiple languages, followed by the victims' names.

Even after all this time, fresh flowers still lay at the base, a silent tribute to the lost.

Willa scanned the names and found the one that was both familiar and foreign to her.

Elliot, also known as Five-Poisons.

Such a blatantly provocative nickname, yet it had lain hidden here for so long, commemorated and mourned. Shameless!

Willa's gaze hardened as she studied the name, her eyes betraying scorn, anger, and a complex web of emotions. She couldn't understand how someone so full of venom could be her progenitor.

Who was her mother?

What was the purpose behind her birth?

Could a remorseless, conscienceless monster truly love his wife and child?

Willa was baffled.

What was the point of her existence in this world?

Other children were legacies, treasures, and the continuation of their families.

And her?

She was darkness, sorrow, a living apology to the world—if there was anything she shared with other children, it was continuation.

Continuation of a creator's evil, shadowy legacy.

Willa's fists clenched as she stared at the name.

The sun warmed her jacket, but it couldn't match the heat in her gaze.

"Does this monument honor someone you knew?" A voice came from behind her. Willa turned to see an older man dressed as a gardener, his hair silvered with age. "No, nobody," she replied.

"Well, that's fortunate. You looked so sad; I thought maybe you were missing a family member. It's best that you're not," the man said as he arranged the flowers neatly and wiped the dust from the monument.

It was unclear if he was speaking to himself or Willa when he added, "I was here cleaning when the shooting happened, right in this spot. Scared the daylights out of me, peed my pants even. If it hadn't been for Elliot, my name would be on this stone too."

Willa was taken aback. Elliot?

She pointed to the name, "Him?"

The gardener looked up, smiled at Elliot's name, and said, "Yes, him. A very genteel man from Veridia, my hero." Willa's brow furrowed. He saved people?

How is that possible?

"Excuse me, could you tell me more about what happened back then? I'm very curious."

The gardener stopped his cleaning, nodded, and said, "I'd be glad to."

In the cafeteria, Willa sat across from the gardener, listening to stories of F-Poison's time abroad.

"Elliot didn't like us calling him that. Preferred his nickname; said it was a challenge to himself. My janitor's quarters were na isdormeandi ve go} forkToWedch other through small favors. When he stayed on as a faculty member, we grew even closer. Oh yes, he had a good friend, a handsome Veridian man who was obsessed with plants—quite the heartthrob at the school."

Willa knew he was talking about Flynn.

The old man continued, "They were inseparable, often drinking and

chatting together, dsjаметirhes' |

they' inuit@me! didn't understand

their technical jargon, so | just drank

with them. Then came the shooting,

so sudden and chaotic. Please read

the original content at

NovelDrama.Org.

Many died that day, students and teachers. | was in the garden when the shooting started, knew it because a bullet whizzed past my leg. | was petrified, too scared to move, wet myself. If it hadn't been for Elliot..."

The old man with snow-white hair wiped a tear from his cheek as he recounted the harrowin ale-"But! | ghsheniaten enw to run or even scream for help. | just knew | might be done for. Just when | thought | was about to meet my maker, Elliot showed up.

He grabbed my hand, and we bolted with that criminal hot on our heels. We were cornered, and that's when he stood in front of me like a human shield."

As the old man spoke, his voice trembled, and more tears spilled over. "Elliot's blood splattered all over me as he fell to the ground right before my eyes.

We were this close... the cops arrived moments later. If we had just held out a little longer, we would have been saved." The old man was visibly shaken, clearly filled with regret over the events of that fateful day.

But Willa couldn't help but feel skeptical. The man the old-timer spoke of, he couldn't be F-Poison.

That guy wouldn't pick up a gun unless it was to use it, let alone save someone's life.

It sounded like a fairy tale, too good to be true.

Chapter 654

Willa handed the elderly man with snow-white hair a piece of paper. "So, about FI... that Veridian man, the one who's crazy about plants?"

The old man composed himself. "Since that incident, Flynn hasn't visited much. He lost his usual cheerfulness; Elliot's death hit him hard. Later, he chose to stay on campus and even found himself a stunning girlfriend. With her support, he gradually recovered. He went back to Veridia a while back and stopped by to thank me for looking after him. After that, | lost touch with

him." And later, of course, he ended up in prison, tormented day after day, never to find peace again.

Willa's gaze hardened as she asked, "All these years, do you still visit Elliot's memorial when you remember him?"

The old man nodded and then shook his head. "Not exactly. After Elliot passed away, | moved into his dorm room. | kept all his belongings, thinking I'd return them to his parents. But some things couldn't be taken, so | left them as they were."

Aglimmer shone in Willa's eyes. "Can you take me to see his room?" The old man seemed to have not spoken about these memories for a long time and agreed readily, "Sure, let's go."

The dorm was a two-bedroom with a living area. The old man lived in the right room, while the sunlit room on the left belonged to F-Poison.

Willa pushed the door open and entered. The room was tidy, preserved in the style of many years ago. It was clear the old man held this place dear.

"May I have a moment alone here?" Willa asked.

The old man nodded, "Of course. But may I ask, who was Elliot to you?"

Willa pressed her lips, "He was my father."

The old man paused in surprise. "I thought there was something of him in you. I guessed right then. Child, take your time to remember your father."

Willa thanked him and then closed the door behind her.

Remember?

Impossible.

Willa walked around the small yet comfortable room, thanks to its well-organized space.

She patted the bedspread. The sunlight was warm here. Even without airing out the bedding, it felt comforting to touch. Then, she took a deep breath and lay down on the bed.

This was probably the closest she'd ever been to her biological father since she could remember.

As a child, Willa had been envious watching Sasha bounce on Jasper's bed, calling for him to wake up. But fearing her godfather's displeasure at overstepping, she could only watch secretly. Later, as Diana grew older, she joined Sasha in the ritual.

Willa only watched from the sidelines.

She had always known she was adopted, so she never overstepped her bounds. Even though the Perez family treated her very well, as one of their own, she knew she had to be aware of her place. She couldn't take their kindness for granted or use it as an excuse for indulgence.

She owed it to her adoptive family to repay them in every way she could. Now, lying on F-Poison's bed, she felt no special connection. Nothing like the joy Sasha or Diana seemed to feel.

Willa sighed, stood up, and approached F-Poison's wardrobe. She opened it to find a few simple, outdated pieces of clothing. Looking further, she found a box with more personal garments, but nothing out of the ordinary.

Closing the wardrobe, she sat down at F-Poison's desk and opened a drawer. Inside were a few textbooks and notebooks filled with lesson plans, nothing more.

It all seemed too clean.

After going through all of F-Poison's notes, which were filled with technical jargon Willa couldn't understand, she took photos to show Sasha back home.

Suddenly, she noticed a gap between the desk and the wall. Something was stuck behind it.

Bending down, Willa found a dust-covered notebook.

The first line took her by surprise:

[Notes on the ST-0 Upgrade.]

It was filled with dense foreign notes beyond Willa's comprehension. But she knew this could well be the precursor to ST-1. Willa photographed the contents and sent them to Karen, then packed the notebook to take with her.

After saying goodbye to the old man, Willa set out for Veridia.

On the phone, Karen asked, "Willa, did you find anything else, like syringes or reagents?"

"No, it's been so many years; that janitor cleans every day. There's not even a fingerprint | ft And theres! hingabout BHR) \n the lesson plans or anything. If | hadn't noticed the gap above the desk and found the notebook, | wouldn't have found anything."

"Alright, | got it. Come back for now." After hanging up, Karen printed out the information Willa had sent.

Vivienne held the printouts in her hand. "Mom, why do | feel like F-Poison wasn't just trying to upgrade ST-0? It looks like he was also recording the effects of the injections."

Karen nodded. "You're right. But back then, Flynn was the only one around F-Poison. Could he have been experimenting on him?"

Vivienne shook her head as she reviewed the data. "Not necessarily. There are two sets of cel The pither acl year be himself. F is notes, it seems he relied heavily on this medicine. Mom, when you developed ST-1, did you find any addictive substances in it?"

Karen frowned. "No. | had contact with ST-0, and it's not like drugs; it doesn't have addictive components. Besides, if it were addictive, Flynn would've probably died in agony in jail by now."

"So F-Poison experimented on himself? But what did he stand to gain?"

Vivienne set down the data, having memorized it after one glance, no longer needing to hold it in her hands.

Karen furrowed her brow, a hint of skepticism in her voice as she said, "Could it be that this drug can actually change a person's conscience?"

Vivienne nearly choked on her drink. "Mom, you know that a conscience is something you're born with." "Then why would he save someone?" Karen's question left Vivienne speechless. Indeed, a complete psychopath like F-Poison saving a life? Inconceivable!

Vivienne lounged on the couch, resting her head on Karen's lap, her bright eyes shimmering with deep contemplation. "Mom, what if he faked his own death?"

"Even if he did fake his death, after all these years, he'd be an old man like your grandpa," Karen mused esi)

gaze lost i he listakde sure, he TRS able to pull some

strings in GTO, but with his old age, how effective could he be? Running an empire like GTO is no small feat. And where on earth could he hide?"

Chapter 655

Vivienne didn't respond. The enigma of F-Poison still perplexed her heart. He was the first mystery she'd pursued for so long without any leads.

The same was true for Karen, of course.

"It seems the answer to the secret still lies in the potion," Karen said, gently tousling Vivienne's hair and pinching her cheek. "Come on, let's head to the lab."

Vivienne rolled over on Karen. "Mom, can we grab a bite before we go?" "Why is it always about food with you?" "Mr. Wolf always takes me for a treat before we head out. If you don't, I'm not going anywhere!"

Karen's lips curved into a slight smile as she pulled out her phone and dialed Percival. "Your Vivienne is craving something delicious. Can you drop it off at YQ Research Center?"

Percival was in the middle of a meeting, but upon hearing the request, he immediately wrapped it up. Nothing was more important than Vivienne wanting a delectable treat!

Watching her mother's cunning face, Vivienne grumbled, "I got all my sneakiness from you!"

"Well, you're my girl, aren't you? Let's get moving!"

There was no helping it; the only person who could truly handle Vivienne was Karen.

At the YQ Research Center, Percival arrived with a Japanese meal and decided to wait around. Brody passed by Percival multiple times, rolling his eyes at each encounter.

Finally, Percival caught him. "Ever know what it's like to have an eyeball gouged out?"

Brody shivered but retorted, "You heartbreaker. Do you know what it feels like to be castrated?" Percival was baffled; had he broken Brody's heart or what?

Realization dawned upon Brody from Percival's expression, "Not me! That pig!"

Percival was even more confused now. Which pig was he talking about?

Brody rolled his eyes and dragged Percival into his lab.

Inside, they saw a small room with a person sitting in it, with only one eye and surrounded by photos of Percival. Muttering something incomprehensible, this person caught their attention.

Brody scoffed, "She's always a nuisance when I'm conducting experiments. The only way to keep her calm is by plastering your photos around, which is incredibly annoying."

Percival then remembered her name, Calista Pendleton.

Vivienne and Karen also arrived, each carrying a box of sushi.

"Is this girl's organs starting to fail?" Karen inquired.

Brody pursed his lips. "Yes, but it's not my fault. | just conducted a few experiments on her!" Without asking, they knew what kind of experiments Brody had subjected Calista to.

Brody leaned on the railing, looking at the somewhat maniacal Calista. "Vivienne, shouldn't you be finding me a new test subject by now? Although your medicine has been effective, and she is indeed slowly regenerating her organs, the human body's endurance is limited. Her organs will inevitably begin to fail, and by the looks of it, she won't last much longer."

Vivienne handed Percival a piece of salmon sushi. "Really? I'll look for another candidate. Someone with a death wish, perhaps, and send them your way."

Brody nodded eagerly. "Yes, yes, please hurry. But please, no more of your love rivals; | don't want to be collecting your husband's photos everywhere."

Vivienne paused, popping the next piece of salmon into her own mouth and casting a glance at Percival. Percival thought to himself: I'm being wronged here! Brody: There's no innocent man in this world! Except for me, of course!

Percival could only watch as the salmon meant for him disappeared, the thought of turning Brody into a test subject crossing his mind.

Karen finished her sushi, observing Calista's failing organs, then suddenly had an idea. "Rex, bring the ST-1 and inject it into Calista." The others were stunned, but Vivienne quickly caught on.

Brody was the first to object, adamantly refusing, "No way, Boss. We only have two doses of ST-1 left. You've already had me alter cell growth with it, which has wasted a lot. If we inject this into her, there will be no chance for research! If you want her dead, leave it to me!"

Karen, however, ignored him, picking up ST-1 and preparing to inject it into Calista.

"Think about this, Boss!" Brody yelled.

Vivienne pulled him back by the collar as if he were a little puppy. "ST-1 is her discovery. Are you worried she can't make more?" It dawned on Brody. "Alright, alright, do as you please!"

Really, these two women were something else!

Once upon a time, Brody had a significant reputation in the underworld, a name that resonated far and wide!

It was all because of the Specter Healer!

Frustrating, to say the least!

Karen and Vivienne didn't have the time to pay attention to Brody's internal cries. They injected Calista, who had lost her senses, with ST-1.

Her body was hooked up to numerous monitoring devices, tracking the condition of her organs.

After the injection, there was no immediate change. Calista seemed to be in agonizing pain, writhing on the floor, screaming incoherently, reminiscent of Flynn's torment in prison.

It wasn't until a half-hour later that Calista finally stabilized. She sat on the floor, gasping for air as the pain on her face gradually faded.

Then, Calista's failing organs began to show signs of recovery, their mM OAS acelin royinah . They were still low compared to the average person but no longer life-threatening.

ST-1 had miraculously begun to repair Calista's failing and nearly dead organs! Vivienne and Karen were incredulous at the turn of events.

The human body's tolerance for medical intervention has its limits, and once those are exceeded, the very drugs that once sustained life can turn treacherous.

Take Calista, for example. Previously, Brody had pumped her full of every medication under the sun in a desperate bid to keep the reaper at bay.

But even with that pharmaceutical arsenal, organ failure loomed like a storm on the horizon. Just half an hour ago, Calista was knocking on death's door.

Now, against all odds, her organs had made a miraculous comeback and kicked into gear! Brody's eyes widened in disbelief.

It was a defiance of nature, a slap in the face to conventional wisdom!

Vivienne stepped forward and ran a battery of tests on Calista. It was true—she was genuinely on the mend, no smoke and mirrors.

Karen, clutching the remaining vial of ST-1, felt a daring idea crystallize in her mind. "Percival, | need to see Flynn." "Master, why do you need to see him?" Percival asked, puzzled.

A frosty glint flickered in Karen's eyes. "| Suspect there's more than meets the eye betwega|&Poséa ni Fiyynramore that just a mentor-protege relationship. Perhaps Flynn holds the key to unraveling the mysteries of F-Poison."

F-Poison was both supremely arrogant and a master of concealment. Otherwise, he wouldn't have managed to masquerade as Elliot through the halls of high school and college for all those years.

To have Flynn as a disciple, to confide every secret, even divulgi

the grit ejails of Hilfe Perez fachilys atched Sasha—there had to be layers to this that hadn't been peeled back yet.

Chapter 656

Vivienne nodded in agreement. "It's puzzling. Why did F-Poison tell Flynn about my mom being taken? Was there anything else he mentioned?"

"Alright, I'll take care of it," Percival replied before dialing up Thomas. Soon, Thomas had arranged for Karen to visit Flynn.

"Percival, there's another thing - Gillian's back."

Percival furrowed his brow. "She's back already?"

"Yeah, the higher-ups say the surveillance footage involving Gillian doesn't prove much. They're calling it a professional mishap, gave her a mark on her record, and she's back."

Hearing this, Percival almost crushed his phone in frustration. Hundreds were injured, Soren and Astrid were still unconscious, and Leopold and Anna were unable to walk without stitches. Just a professional mishap?

Through the phone, Thomas could feel Percival's anger but continued, "However, Vance has stripped Gillian of her authority. She shouldn't be causing trouble anymore, or at least, she's lost the capacity to do so."

Percival took a breath. "Fine, | got it."

Karen went to the secret prison alone, while Vivienne stayed with Percival at the YQ Research Center. Vivienne had a new idea she wanted to try out.

Inside the prison, the darkness was as oppressive as ever.

Through the monitor, Karen saw Scott grading papers while Flynn was still curled up in pain on the floor. After a thorough check, Karen walked in.

"Boss, be careful. I'll wait outside for you," Thomas stood guard at the door.

Although nothing should happen, Thomas was still worried. After all, who could feel secure with the current state of Vanguard Agency?

Karen nodded and entered.

By now, Flynn had regained his composure, his clothes soaked with sweat, as he sat blankly on the ground. Seeing Karen enter, Flynn was startled, then let out a laugh.

Karen narrowed her eyes. "Long time no see."

Flynn's laughter stopped. "We haven't met before, have we? I've seen your daughter many times, though. She used to call me 'Uncle Flynn.' | wonder what she calls me now."

"Criminal." Karen sat down, a faint smile on her face.

Flynn took a deep breath. "You're here to ask about my mentor, aren't you? | heard there were quite a few interesting stories when he took you away. Do you remember any of them?"

Karen's voice was cool and detached. "I don't remember. Care to enlighten me?"

Flynn stood up and walked to the bars, sizing Karen up, an unreadable look in his eyes.

"Girls change a lot as they grow. I'm curious to see what Vivienne will look like when she's your age." Karen suddenly stood, a strange feeling stirring deep within her, yet she couldn't put her finger on it. The statement felt familiar, yet she couldn't recall why.

Flynn ignored Karen's surprise and lay back on his bed.

"Do you know Willa well? Are you two close? When can I meet her? Isn't she curious about me at all? After all, I'm the only person in this world who's had contact with her father."

Karen slowly regained her composure and sat back down, "Perhaps you are the second one." Flynn's swinging leg paused, then resumed its motion. "That janitor from Scepter University? He's still alive, huh?" Karen nodded. "Of course, thanks to your master, isn't it?"

After a moment, Flynn huffed, "Right, he should live well, live for my master, watch the world change every day, record it diligently, and then burn it for him."

Karen glanced at him dispassionately. "Those in hell don't receive the sentiments from the living."

Flynn was silent for a few seconds, then slowly sat up against the headboard, the sweat stains on his body almost gone. "You're right. What's the use of sentiment when you're in hell?"

Karen didn't want to engage in meaningless chatter with Flynn and asked directly, "Why did F-Poison save that janitor?" Flynn hummed thoughtfully for a moment, then said lightly, "Probably for rebirth, I guess."

Karen frowned. "Rebirth?"

"Yeah, haven't you read those time-travel novels? The protagonist dies dramatically, unwilling to let go of their unfulfilled dreams, so they make a deal with God, come back with a system, and start a charmed life!"

Karen knew Flynn was toying with her, but for some reason, she felt there was more to his words.

Suddenly, the prison door opened, and Thomas's voice could be heard arguing with someone.

"I told you someone's visiting here. What's your problem?" Thomas's voice was deep and angry, seemingly holding back intense fury.

A voice filled with defiance and arrogance retorted, "I need to transfer a high-risk pen we pen now. This is kind of riff-raff have you let in? Thomas, watch it, or I'll file a complaint against you!"

At that, Thomas's eyes narrowed, and a chill emanated from him. He came forward, closing the distance (illegally and rather) with a swift move, and grabbed her by the throat, his voice as cold as ice. "Want to die? I can oblige you right now!"

He was truly enraged!

The last mission could have avoided casualties among the Vanguard Agency team, but Gillian had used her influence to pressure them. The mission was critical, and he had agreed with Vance to bring Gillian along.

He intended to keep Gillian under his watchful eye, better than allowing her to stab them in the back unseen. But he never expected that right under his watch, she would cause a catastrophic loss by opening the speakers.

He had been berating himself for days. If he had been more assertive, none of this would've happened. This mess was Gillian's fault, and he had to accept his share of the blame, too.

So, to avoid wrecking Percival and Vivienne's plans, he kept his cool and didn't go after Gillian. But now, he had reached his breaking point!

Gillian could die a hundred times, and it wouldn't bring back his teammates.

Gillian's face was turning tomato red as she was gasping for air, her head 'aching. "Shomsh S cript eatg? et go of me! If you kill me, the eee won't let you off the hook. You'll be facing a court-martial!" Please read the

original content at NovelDrama.Org.

Thomas applied more pressure, his voice icy. "Scared? Me?"

At that moment, Karen stepped outside and caught sight of Gillian, her face contorted and uglier than ever under Thomas's choke hold.

Karen just glanced over and called out, "Thomas!"

Hearing her, Thomas's rage-filled expression softened a bit, and he released Gillian, turning respectfully to Karen. "Boss, are you done?"

Karen nodded. "Yeah, who's this?"

Thomas lowered his eyelids in distaste and muttered, "Gillian Ashford."

Chapter 657

"Oh," Karen muttered under her breath, realization dawning on her. So this was the infamous Gillian. The incredibly foolish idiot!

It wasn't surprising she described her that way; in Karen's eyes, Gillian was just that.

Stupid, despicable, and needing a beating!

How had Vivienne not knocked her lights out?

Gillian, hands clutched around her neck, took several deep breaths, cursing under her breath at Thomas for being such a brute with no chivalry.

After a moment, she finally turned her attention to Karen. The legendary former captain of the Vanguard Agency, known as Lark. And, as fate would have it, Vivienne's mother!

Gillian narrowed her eyes. "Who the hell are you? This is the secret Vanguard Agency prison! You think you can just waltz in here as you please? Thomas, let me tell you, you're in for a punishment! Don't think just because Vance told me to stay out of Vanguard Agency's business that | can't deal with you!"

Before Gillian could finish, Karen lunged forward, gripping Gillian's throat tightly.

She slammed her against the wall, feet dangling, struggling in vain.

Even Thomas, standing aside, was taken aback by how swiftly Karen had acted. Gillian was gasping for air, on the verge of passing out.

"Dying is easy, and | could help you with that," Karen's voice was as cold as the Arctic.

Gillian, twice throttled, was furious but no match for Karen. She wanted to fight back, but a twisted smile crossed her face instead. "Go ahead, kill me! Let's see if you dare!"

Karen's lips curled into a smirk, her free hand tracing Gillian's contorted face, her fingertip grazing the skin, leaving a painful sting.

Karen's icy gaze met Gillian's, whispering with a devilish tinge, "Don't rush. What's so scary about death? The real terror is wanting to die but being unable to. Your life is in my hands now. I'll decide when to send you to hell."

Thomas looked at the wicked smile on her face, a spitting image of Vivienne. Like mother, like daughter — a frightening duo indeed! Karen dropped Gillian to the floor with controlled force. The fall drew blood and broke a few ribs, but nothing more serious.

Brushing off her hands, Karen spoke, "By the way, this is the Vanguard Agency's secret prison. If | decide to enter, it opens its doors wide. Got that, Gillian?"

Thomas couldn't help but chuckle.

Did Gillian really think she stood taller than Karen?

Not even Webster would dare cross Karen!

Karen's refusal to return to the Vanguard Agency had been a choice of preference, not a necessity.

At the mere mention of her name, the Agency would've rolled out the red carpet.

Such was the prestige of this secret prison, and Karen could come and go as she pleased.

Even now, Karen's records were held in the highest confidentiality at headquarters, her medals enough to crush anyone. Today's visit through Thomas was merely an adherence to the agency's protocol.

Karen waved to Thomas and then left the prison.

Flynn wasn't as simple as he seemed, and she suspected there were questions left unasked.

After her departure, Thomas, not wanting to linger, left Gillian to her own devices.

It took Gillian a while to regain her composure, gasping for air before standing up.

Karen was even more terrifying than Vivienne. When would this mother-and-daughter pair finally be gone? Rubbing her chest, Gillian stumbled into Flynn's cell.

Flynn yawned. "What, they've changed the help that brings meals?"

Gillian tossed in a pill. "Look closely. I'm Gillian!"

"Hmm? You've been beaten up? Tsk, poor thing," Flynn said, catching the pill and swallowing it down.

No sooner had he ingested it than his brow furrowed tightly, and he collapsed in agony, drenched in sweat, nearly unconscious. Gillian watched, her brow knitting at the sight.

Truly horrifying.

She wondered what they were all playing at.

"Someone will transfer you tomorrow. Try to avoid Karen if you can," Gillian said quickly, then hurried off, fearing Flynn's madness might drag her down, too.

Unseen by anyone, the surveillance in the cell silently erased the footage of Gillian dispensing the pill.

Meanwhile, at the YQ Research Center, Vivienne had finally made a breakthrough in her experiments.

A satisfied smile played on her lips. "Success!"

Percival, always in the dark about Vivienne's work, saw she was finished and ruffled her hair. "How's it going? Hungry?" Brody, from the side, muttered, "Didn't she just wolf down a ton of sushi?"

Vivienne shook her head. "I'll eat later. I need to discuss something with my mom. When is she back?"

As if on cue, Karen pushed open the door. "I'm back now, and I've got something to discuss with you, too."

The mother and daughter shared a knowing smile, and Percival tactfully exited.

In the lab, Vivienne showed her findings to Karen. "ST-1 can heal Calista's failing organs; could it also revive your memory?" "That's what I wanted to talk about," replied Karen, examining Vivienne's work. "From what we've seen, it's possible."

The moment Vivienne saw Calista's organs healed by ST-1, she thought of using it to treat Karen's amnesia.

Karen's amnesia wasn't due to some psychosomatic trauma; it was an

result of a nasty blayetd the heat pentraps bbrhpounded by some sort

of drug cocktail administered by shady characters like F-Poison.

The knock on the noggin she suffered at Diana's hands had done more than just ring her bell—it had caused semi-permanent damage to her memory banks.

Bit by bit, Karen had clawed back snippets of her past through sheer willpower and self-treatment, but the full memories remained frustratingly out of reach.

If this miracle compound ST-1 could rejuvenate dying cells, maybe, just maybe, it could patch up the frayed tapestry of Karen's memory as well.

"Mom, | want to give it a shot, but | can't make any promises. The tri

look promisin but thers nO pretend ve might be opening a whole can of worms,' Vivienne confessed, her voice betraying a rare note of uncertainty.

Vivienne was usually the epitome of confidence, a walking and talkin medical encyclpggqjacwho obuid pinpotat BhAiment with her hands tied behind her back. But this was uncharted territory, even for Karen.

This wasn't just some routine procedure; it was an all-or-nothing gamble, a high-stakes experiment with no room for error.

And the patient was her mother. How could Vivienne not feel the weight of the world on her shoulders? One wrong move, and she could lose her mom forever.

Karen clasped Vivienne's hands, giving them a reassuring squeeze.

"Scared, are you? Or are you more scared I'll come to my senses and slap some sense into you?" she teased, a wry smile tugging at the corner of her mouth.

"Really, Mom? Jokes at a time like this?" Vivienne pleaded, guiding Karen to take a seat. "If I mess this up, you might never find your way back to us."

Chapter 658

Vivienne gazed deeply into the eyes of her mother, whom she had waited over ten years to reunite with. There was an undeniable reluctance to let go.

Memories, after all, weren't everything. If they couldn't be retrieved, then so be it.

Karen ruffled Vivienne's hair affectionately. "Frost, I believe in you. You're my pride and joy in this world, and nothing will ever pose an obstacle in your way. You're my treasure, and whatever you set your mind to, you'll surely succeed."

She knew her daughter all too well. Vivienne didn't want to lose her; she didn't want to be cast into the world as an orphan again. Indeed, those lost memories weren't crucial.

She now knew how she had vanished and had been reunited with her biological father. Whether her memories returned or not wasn't important.

When F-Poison had abducted her from the Perez family, Diana hadn't even seen his true face. At Scepter University, the white-haired old man who knew F-Poison had only seen Elliot's face. Flynn might know, but he would never tell.

Thus, in this entire world, Karen was the only one who might have seen F-Poison's real face. And those lost memories? They needed to be recovered at all costs.

Vivienne bit her lower lip pensively. "I only have one chance."

One opportunity: success meant jubilation; failure meant no second chances.

Karen smiled reassuringly. "I know, but I'm not going to die. Your mentor has seen it in the cards — I'm going to live to be two hundred!"

Vivienne knew her mother was jesting, but it helped ease her tension slightly.

Karen continued, "I must recover that part of my memory, so rest assured, nothing will happen to me. And my dear daughter, when have you ever faced defeat?"

Holding Vivienne's hand tightly, Karen said, "Go ahead with confidence. No matter what happens, I'm here for you." Vivienne's lips were pressed firmly together, and she didn't respond for a long time.

She was contemplating, hesitating.

But seeing the resolve in Karen's eyes, her uncertainty seemed to fade away.

"Alright, we'll start tomorrow. For today, how about we go back and have a potluck dinner with Grandpa and the uncles?" "Sounds perfect!"

The mother and daughter left hand in hand, and Percival, seeing the streaks on Vivienne's cheeks, didn't ask any questions. He took their bags and drove them back in his usual dependable manner.

Back at the Perez Mansion, Zelda had prepared a hearty stew, knowing Karen was coming home with a craving. The whole Perez family bustled about in preparation for the feast.

Except for Maddox.

The bachelor was immersed in playing house with Natalia and Yasmine.

As Vivienne, Percival, and Karen entered, they saw Maddox's head adorned with a variety of colorful hair clips. "What role are you playing today, Uncle Maddox?" Vivienne chuckled.

Maddox heaved a sigh, only to be scolded by Natalia, "Vivienne, don't talk to him; he's in time-out!"

Yasmine sighed, "I mean, come on, Yuri, don't be so harsh on the kid. So what if she didn't finish her homework? Can't we just eat first?"

Vivienne finally caught on; Natalia and Yasmine were impersonating Zelda and Yuri Perez, and Maddox was, well, themselves! Vivienne laughed. "Uncle Maddox, have Natalia and Yasmine stopped letting you play the boy roles?"

Maddox looked helpless, sighing. "Having too many nieces isn't great either. Fredrick, when are you going to have a son?" Fredrick lobbed a piece of watermelon into Maddox's mouth with absolute precision and said, "Shut it. I want daughters!"

Alice Churchill chimed in, "You want more kids? Go have them yourself. Those two rascals are enough for me. Dad, how about I bring them over tomorrow?"

Jasper, who had been enjoying the show, waved his hands frantically at the suggestion of taking on his grandsons. "No, no, no, keep them. If it's too much, send them to your older brother; he loves entertaining kids."

Luke balked. "No way, I'm done with that. They're grown now, not fun anymore!"

Carmen Pendleton sighed. "Why do you always treat kids like toys? It's exasperating."

Vivienne's lips curled slightly. "Aunt Carmen, it's genetic. My mom does the same!"

"That runs in your grandpa's side!" Karen added, munching on watermelon.

Percival squeezed Vivienne's cheek gently. "Don't worry, when we have kids, I won't treat them like toys."

Maddox, with watermelon juice all over his face, finally spoke up, "Vivienne, how many kids are you planning on? I'll get you a big round bed!"

"Save the round bed for yourself!" All the men, except Percival, retorted in unison!

A couple of thuds later, two bumps formed on Maddox's head—one from a watermelon seed and the other from the rind. No need to ask; it was Jasper and Fredrick's doing.

Maddox sighed deeply. "What's happened to this wicked world?"

The Perez Mansion was abuzz with laughter and merriment.

Not far away, Willa sat atop the garden wall, observing the scene.

Karen was always the first to sense Willa's presence. She turned and saw Willa waving at her from afar.

Silently slipping away from the Perez Mansion, Karen met Willa at the same small steak house where she and Finnian had dined previously. Two plates of steaks were already waiting.

"When did you get back?" Karen approached casually, taking a plate and cutting the steak with natural ease.

Willa took a bite of the side salad and pulled out a notebook from her bag—the very same one she had found at Scepter University.

"Sasha," she offered the notebook to Karen and said, "take a look. Maybe it will be useful to you."

Truth be told, Willa had already snapped photos of the contents and sent them to Karen, although she | coyly pretended to wonder if the photos might differ from what was actually on the pages. After all, the original is always the most reliable.

Karen flipped through a few pages, and there it was, something Willa hadn't captured with her camera. A sketch of a butterfly, the kind a young girl might doodle.

Two of them, orbiting a rose, seemingly lost in a delicate dance.

Romeo and Juliet.

For reasons unknown, when Karen laid eyes on those butterflies, that phrase just popped into her head. Karen chuckled. "They've got quite the romantic vibe going on."

Willa had noticed the butterflies, too, but hadn't thought much of it.

In Willa's world, love was merely a lubricant in life, not a necessity.

For years, she avoided even the slightest hint of any sort of affection. Because, for the time being, she didn't need any lubricant.

"Is it of any use to you?" Willa asked again. Putting down the notebook, Karen faced Willa seriously. "Willa, aside from this, is there really nothing else you want to tell me?" Willa paused, spoon midway to her mouth, not understanding what Karen meant.

Looking into Willa's baffled eyes, Karen couldn't resist and lightly tapped her forehead. "Why does something have to be useful or helpful to be worth doing?"

Willa was even more perplexed. "If it's useless, why bother doing it?"

"For joy, for happiness, because | damn well feel like it!" Karen responded, enunciated, as if she were speaking to a child. "You can't expect to eat the filling of a steak without the salad. Because | want to!"

With that, Karen picked up the steak with her fork, leaving behind an untouched portion of salad.

Chapter 659

Willa took a bite of the salad and asked nonchalantly, "I don't see the link." "But there is!"

Karen exhaled heavily and pinched Willa's cheek. "Didn't Dad drill it into you since you were knee-high to a grasshopper that you can't be picky, that you can't just eat the steak and ignore the salad? Because that's just common sense, it's the basics, it's about not being wasteful."

Willa nodded, confused. "Isn't that how it should be?"

"But what if you just don't like the salad? If you don't want to eat it, then don't. Not everything you do has to please Dad, nor does every action have to benefit the Perez family before you decide to do it. Everything you do should make you happy, got it?"

Willa sort of got it, but not really. She had always told herself that whatever happened, she needed to put the interests of the Perez family first.

The only time she ever went against Jasper's wishes was when she had to leave the Perez family because of the F-Poison incident.

But technically, it was still for the benefit of the Perez family.

This mindset had become deeply ingrained in Willa.

Karen's sudden outburst today left her at a loss.

What were the things that she actually liked?

Seeing Willa's puzzled and lost gaze, Karen didn't press on. She knew Willa had to figure it out on her own.

Some things are buried deep in the heart and aren't so easily rooted out, especially for someone as stubborn as Willa. Coming to a real understanding would take time.

"Alright, chew on that for a while. I'll give this notebook to Frost. If there's anything else, go straight to her."

As Karen got up to leave, Willa grabbed her wrist. "Sasha, where are you going?"

Willa, with a keen sense, sensed a farewell in Karen's demeanor. Her eyes held a tightness as if Karen would disappear the next second.

Jasper had just welcomed her back; where could she be going now?

Karen patted Willa's hand gently, as light as a spring breeze.

"Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere."

Willa didn't know what Karen was planning, but she guessed it involved going somewhere very, very far away. Otherwise, Karen wouldn't have said what she did today.

Willa kept her grip firm, her eyes resolute as if to say, "Wherever you go, I'll follow."

Karen smiled helplessly, her mouth curving into a gentle arch. "Tomorrow, Frost is going to treat my memory loss after-effects. Maybe by the next time we meet, I'll remember who they all are."

Willa was silent for a long while before her deep voice finally broke the quiet. "Is it dangerous?"

Karen neither denied nor confirmed. Danger was not an absolute concern for her. Regaining her memory was what truly mattered.

Karen ruffled Willa's hair. "I'm not going to die."

She wasn't lying; she had no talent in fortune-telling, but Ulysses did.

He had said she'd live to a ripe old age, surrounded by children and grandchildren, enjoying family bliss. She believed him!

Willa didn't say anything more. She understood that Karen had her thoughts and decisions, and once she had made up her mind, she wouldn't change it.

After Karen left, Willa sat still, slowly eating the steak on her plate.

She looked at the plate, quietly separating the steak from the salad with her fork.

Suddenly, a plate appeared in front of her with only a plain steak.

Willa looked up sharply to see Maddox, with a cheeky grin, watching her. "Eat up if you like it. Have as much as you want!" Willa stiffened, so lost in her thoughts that she had completely ignored the danger of Maddox sneaking up on her!

She darted back, ready to flee.

But Maddox was quick on her heels, "Willa, you..."

"Hey, you haven't paid yet! Three steaks!"

Before Maddox could chase after her, the fast-acting steak house owner grabbed him. "Maddox, you can't dine and dash!" "Man, we go way back. Do you have to do this?" Maddox rubbed his head in exasperation.

In that split second, Willa would have definitely vanished.

The steak house owner snorted and said, "Fredrick already told me you're a gambling addict and a womanizer, too. Seeing how you chased after that girl, he's right! Pay your bill!"

At this moment, Maddox almost wished he could skin Fredrick alive. This was no way to spread rumors about his younger brother!

Frustrated, Maddox took out a stack of hundreds and stuffed it in the owner's hands. "From now on, I'm your VIP. Don't ever ask me to pay again!"

The steak house owner immediately let go of Maddox and said with a smile, "No problem! Take care!"

With a groan, Maddox stormed out. However, on the empty street, Willa was nowhere to be found.

Just when he had the chance to see her again, she slipped away. He hadn't even asked if she had missed him. Back at the Perez Mansion, Karen and Vivienne were accompanying Jasper, who was enjoying a stew as if nothing had happened.

Maddox, eyeing Karen, had a look of woe on his face. He had overheard the conversation between Karen and Willa. After dinner, Karen took it upon herself to clean up, sending Vivienne to play chess with Jasper.

The other ladies started a game of poker, roping in Percival to spice things up.

Yuri was challenging Luke to a sparring match, insisting Fredrick be the referee.

Normally, Maddox would be causing a ruckus or playing house with Natalia and Yasmine.

But today, he joined Karen by the sink, helping her wash the dishes.

Karen rinsed a bowl and glanced at Maddox. "Did Willa leave you in the dust?"

Maddox exhaled deeply. "Yeah, and I even paid for both your eo Fredrick s seaghusnors about me Kaviga itanizing gambler. Oh, and I'm now a VIP member of that steak house."

Karen burst into laughter. "Out of all of us, your life is the one that's so full of twists and turns it could fill a novel."

"Really?" Maddox paused, turning his head to look at Karen ith a playful' irk "-ageneliooa Yirkd he whole

Abin " _ afminesia therapy thing a bit more intriguing."

Karen faltered for a moment but quickly regained her composure. Maddox, having followed the conversation earlier, must have heard her exchange with Willa.

"Maddox, it's something I'd have to

face sooner or later. | n ed te-getimny Tapaten ences: & Said softly, a

g ti cadence to her voice as she

dried the dishes. Please read the

original content at NovelDrama.Org. Maddox's grip tightened on the towel he was holding, his expression showing a hint of restrained emotion. "Sasha, just how risky is this procedure?"

Karen didn't intend to hide the truth. "There's a ninety-eight percent chance." "For real?" Maddox's eyes lit up at the percentage.

Ninety-eight percent chance — what's there to worry about?

With Vivienne on the case, that measly two percent was practically nonexistent.

Karen's lips curled into a bittersweet smile. "I mean, a ninety-eight percent chance of failure."

Chapter 660

Maddox's grin froze on his face, and the bowl in his hands clattered to the floor.

Heads turned at the sound.

"Maddox, you just broke Natalia and Yasmine's favorite bowl, you're so screwed, man! Say goodbye to your wallet!" "Oh, Maddox, when will you learn? You handle things like a bull in a china shop, and look what happens!"

"Oopsie, don't be mad, Natalia and Yasmine, I'll buy you a new one and make Uncle Maddox here pay up!"

Trying to keep cool, Maddox forced a smile and turned to the girls. "Sorry, Natalia and Yasmine, but I cut my hand pretty bad. Doesn't anyone feel sorry for me?"

Luke immediately whisked the two kids away. "Girls, remember not to date a guy like this one." Yuri and Fredrick also quickly made their exit, unable to watch the embarrassing scene any longer!

After everyone left, Karen pulled out a small bottle of antiseptic powder and sprinkled it on Maddox's wound, which healed quietly.

"No need to look so surprised, Maddox. Without Frost, I'd have less than a 2% chance."

Karen smiled at Maddox and added, "Just don't tell Dad, okay? I don't want him to worry. Just say I'm off to find Frost's dad, and it'll be a long time before I can come back, alright?"

Maddox fought back tears, his eyes reddening but not allowing a single tear to fall.

Even with Vivienne and Karen working together, they only had a 2% chance of success. That left Maddox thinking... "Sasha, can't we just not do it?" Maddox struggled with the idea one last time.

"No, we have to do this," Karen replied with certainty.

Maddox went silent, accepting that this was unstoppable.

In the yard, Jasper and Vivienne were locked in a tense game of chess, neither willing to give in.

Just as the game neared its end, Jasper suddenly asked, "Vivienne, what's your mom up to?"

Vivienne's hand trembled ever so slightly, and she managed a smile. "Oh, just out for dinner, shopping, and a movie." Jasper tapped her head lightly. "She's my daughter; she can't fool me!"

Vivienne could no longer hold back, and her chess piece landed with a thud on the board, shaking slightly before coming to rest. "My mom is attempting a procedure. It could restore memories, or it might..."

Jasper exhaled silently, a heavy breath dissipating into the air, followed by his grave voice. "I knew it. She was too chatty tonight, fussing over this and that. She's up to something, isn't she? And she didn't plan on telling me, did she?"

Vivienne bit her lip. "She doesn't want you to worry."

Jasper chuckled, a hint of sadness in his voice. "Tell me the truth, Vivienne. What are the chances of success?" Vivienne clenched her fists, the words barely escaping her lips. "One percent."

In her eyes, the procedure had only a one percent chance of working.

The ST-1 was powerful; otherwise, it wouldn't have so easily repaired Calista's failing organs. Yet, its effects seemed mild, which baffled Vivienne.

Now, they were about to inject this mysterious ST-1 into Karen and perform brain surgery.

If it weren't Vivienne herself doing it, there wouldn't even be a one percent chance. And that one percent was only for the surgery itself; for the medication, she had no confidence at all.

Jasper nodded, his eyes moist. "Alright, can you promise your grandpa one thing?"

Vivienne looked up into his reddened eyes and said, "Sure, tell me."

"Don't let your mom know I'm aware of this. Pretend I'm clueless so she can go into surgery without any extra burden." Jasper knew his daughter was tough on the outside but carried a heavy heart. She was aware she might not wake up again. So, she chose to leave quietly.

Knowing this, he couldn't burden her. He would pretend to be oblivious, letting his precious daughter take her path without interference.

Especially since the surgeon was his granddaughter, he couldn't add to the pressure she had already faced. Jasper stood up, looking at the finished chess game. "You lost today. Next time, we'll have your mom win it back for you."

A tear dropped onto the chessboard from Vivienne's eye as she stared at the interwoven pieces, her heart heavy with understanding.

Be it Jasper or Karen, none of them wanted to put pressure on her. They had chosen to keep things under wraps instead of revealing the truth.

The Perez Mansion eventually returned to silence, broken only by the occasional snore, which somehow didn't seem loud. In the night, Karen slipped quietly out of her room and into Percival's waiting car.

"Let's go, we should head back. Get some rest."

Percival nodded and drove away from the Perez Mansion.

Maddox sat on the garden wall, watching the car disappear. He clasped his hands together, whispering to the moon. "I want to make a wish for my sister to come back safe."

After a pause, he opened his eyes. "I have never made a wish, moon. You better make this one work, or I'll pluck you from the sky!"

At YQ Research Center, Brody had everything ready, the operating room sterile and waiting.

For Brody, this surgery carried significance as well. He could hardly contain his excitement as he was finally going to see the legendary Specter Healer perform surgery in person! Such a complex procedure was a once-in-a-century spectacle.

How could he not be thrilled? He hadn't slept a wink all night, his eyes glued open as he waited in the operating theater until dawn. He lingered by the door like a loyal dog; his gaze fixed hopefully on the corridor.

At last, he saw Vivienne and Karen descend the stairs, the ever-stoic Percival following closely behind.

"Master, Vivienne, long time no see, huh? You must be wiped out. Here, let me take your stuff!" Brody schmoozed his way over, eagerly taking Vivienne's bag from her hands, his eyes shining with admiration.

Vivienne shot him an indifferent glance. "Only I am allowed inside the OR."

Brody's face fell faster than a house of cards. "What do you mean? How could such a crucial op be a one-person show? Are you pulling my leg?"

"It's true," Karen chimed in from the side, "The procedure is highly confidential, no onlookers. Frost needs complete focus. Plus, someone has to monitor my vitals from outside, and that someone has to be you."

Deflated, Brody slumped into a chair, his hopes dashed to smithereens.

