

## Million-Dollar 671

### Chapter 671

Listening to the man's words, F-Poison was quite pleased. She straightened up and, with a slender finger, gave a gentle pat on the man's shoulder.

"You're destined for great things," she said with a wink. "Let's ditch the self-doubt, okay? I've got a good feeling about you." The man nodded slightly, his face an unreadable mask. "Understood," he replied quietly. Seemingly content, F-Poison patted his cheek and, stifling a yawn, wandered back to her room to rest.

The man stood still for a moment, a cold glint flickering in his eyes. His pocket vibrated with the buzz of his personal cellphone, ringing with a call from abroad.

"Yeah? What? Alright, got it."

After ending the call with icy indifference, he turned and walked away.

Gillian made her way to the Linklater estate; her previous visit and good rapport with Dracon ensured the guards let her pass without issue.

After a thorough check, she was finally inside the Linklater Mansion. To her surprise, as soon as she entered, she saw Percival sitting in the living room, deeply engrossed in conversation with Yorick.

Gillian paused, not expecting to see him there. Percival seemed to not even notice her, continuing his chat with Yorick. Only Dracon came forward to greet her, and they headed to the back garden.

"How could you be so careless to have Vance oust you? Do you have any idea how hard I worked to get you in there?" Dracon scolded as soon as they were alone.

If Yorick hadn't been under the weather these past few days, he would've been at Gillian's doorstep to give her a piece of his mind for bungling such a simple task.

Gillian felt wronged.

Who would've thought an armored vehicle transporting a felon could get hijacked? The Vanguard Agency was massive, yet the perpetrator had vanished without a trace. Even the higher-ups couldn't protect Gillian now.

She was left waiting for news.

But time was not on Gillian's side. F-Poison had abandoned her, and finding shelter was urgent, or she would face an even worse fate than before.

"I didn't see this coming, Mr. Linklater. You're my only hope now. If you don't help me, I'm at a loss!" Gillian clasped Dracon's wrist, her voice tinged with desperation.

"Remember, I'm the one who can save Diana. Help me this once, and I promise to locate her — deal?"

Dracon frowned. "There's only one option left for you. Whether it works is up to you."

"What is it?" Gillian's eyes brightened.

Dracon nodded toward the living room, where Percival was still engaged in his chess game with Yorick. "Him." "What do you mean?"

"Percival may have left the Vanguard Agency, but his ties with the Martinez family run deep. Captains in the agency, like Thomas and Micah, are his people. If you want back in, his word is the only one that will carry any weight."

Gillian bit her lip. How could Percival possibly agree? Their history was fraught with more animosity than a star-crossed feud. It was almost impossible to have Percival help her.

"Today, he's here without a driver. You'll need to think outside the box. Good luck." Dracon handed her a spray bottle and then left.

Gillian stared at the spray bottle and let out a long sigh.

In the living room, Percival bid farewell to Yorick. "I should be going then. Take care of yourself, and when Vivienne's free, we'll visit. Oh, and she reminded you to take your meds on time. I've brought them with me."

Yorick nodded, his smile knowing. "Will do. Drive safe."

Percival understood the unspoken message and took his leave.

Stepping out of the Linklater Mansion, he found Gillian waiting at the entrance with a look of distress.

"Finished with your business, Mr. Ellington?" Gillian asked, clutching her purse and gazing at Percival with feigned innocence. Percival scrutinized her from head to toe, an icy edge to his gaze. "What do you want?"

Gillian nodded sheepishly. "My car broke down, and the tow service hasn't shown up. I'm in a hurry to get back downtown. Could you possibly give me a lift, Mr. Ellington?"

With a scoffing laugh, Percival unlocked his car. "Get in."

Gillian was surprised at how easily he agreed. She had thought she would need to beg or cajole. Men are all the same — a little flutter of the eyelashes, and they're hooked.

She settled into the passenger seat, the spray bottle concealed in her purse.

"You've forgiven me for our past, right?"

Percival raised an eyebrow and smiled. "I don't recall."

"Thank you. I don't know how I could ever repay you... Maybe..."

"How about you come with me somewhere?" he suggested.

Inside, Gillian smirked. She hadn't misjudged him. Without Vivienne by his side, he was showing his true colors.

"Sure, where to?" she said, letting her fingers brush against Percival's shoulder. He narrowed his eyes, smoothly dodging her touch. "Somewhere satisfying."

In his eyes, her hand was nothing but an annoyance—hideous and disgusting! "Alright, I'm all yours." She relaxed, realizing she wouldn't need the spray after all.

The Linklater Mansion, nestled in its

sprawling grounds, was isolated far from any residence. The journey ahead would be a long one.

Gillian had dozed off in the back seat of the car without realizing it.

In her dream, she was entangled in a tumultuous embrace with Percival on a massive round rug. She was on top, and Percival was beneath her, eager and submissive, almost worshipful.

She usurped the place of Vivienne, making her kneel on the ground and repeatedly slap her own face, apologizing to her over and over!

Amusement played on Gillian's lips as she dreamed. She knew it—all of it—was hers for the taking.

At the YQ Research Center, Brody stroked his stubbled chin, eyeing the woman on the operating table. "What's she grinning about?" he wondered aloud.

Vivienne shook her head, her blonde curls bouncing. "Who knows? Must be one hell of a good dream." Brody clicked his tongue in annoyance. "I can't stand people looking all happy in their dreams."

With a swift move, he stepped forward and slapped Gillian across the face.

Jolted awake, Gillian's eyes snapped open to find her wrists and ankles bound to the operating table. Beside her stood a man in a stark white lab coat, his face twisted in a sinister grin.

And to her right, a woman was laughing hysterically, her sanity seemingly hanging by a thread.

Both of them stared at Gillian with a bone-chilling glee.

"Who are you? Where am I? Where's Percival? Do you have any idea who I am? How dare you tie-me, upchke this Haye you lest You? minds?" Gillian demanded, thrashing against the cold metal chains that kept her confined to the small, sterile world of the operating table.

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Brody stepped aside, his hand gently cupping Gillian's cheek, directing her gaze toward the front door. There, Percival and Vivienne stood, arm in arm, beaming at her with the radiant joy of a blooming bouquet. Gillian's eyes widened in disbelief, unable to comprehend the spectacle before her.

What on earth was happening?

Hadn't Percival taken the bait already?

How could this be?

Where in the world was she?

With a casual wave, Percival called out to Gillian, "Don't just hop into a stranger's ride."

With that, he wrapped his arm around Vivienne's waist, and they strolled away.

Despair engulfed Gillian. It felt like she was staring into an abyss that was her life's end.

But unbeknownst to her, dying wouldn't be easy—not with Brody holding the reins.

Brody fished out a spray bottle from Gillian's purse, examining it with a smirk, "Whoa, isn't this the powerful aphrodisiac | whipped up a few years back? Just a drop, and it'll have you in a frenzy of desire."

Swallowing hard, Gillian glared defiantly, "What... what do you plan to do with me? I'm warning you, don't you dare touch me!"

Brody let out a scoff. "Lady, are you for real? Even if | were desperate to hit the sack with you, you'd be the one getting lucky. Where's this confidence coming from?"

With that, he sprayed half the bottle on Gillian's lower body. "I've never seen someone that eager, and I'm curious."

In a mere second, Gillian was writhing in agony, her cries filled with torment. It was hell.

Brody relished her suffering, his gaze shifting to the curious Calista as a wicked idea took root.

"Calista," he said slyly, "this lady here is crazy about Percival. It's because of her that he ditched you."

Calista's composure shattered in an instant, and she lunged at Gillian, fists flying. "Vivienne, you bitch, I'm going to kill you!" Lost to reason, Gillian grabbed Calista's hands, directing them toward herself.

Calista, unhinged, was relentless, nearly tearing Gillian apart.

The operating table was soon drenched in blood. Yet the two women, one crazed, the other delirious, continued their struggle, oblivious to the chaos.

Poor Gillian. Since her arrival in Rivenwood, she had been a constant target of abuse.

Even now, her fate seemed inescapable.

Brody cheered on the sidelines, finding the spectacle immensely entertaining. "Gillian's gonna make one hell of a vessel!" Meanwhile, Percival and Vivienne had left the YQ Research Center and approached their car.

As Vivienne reached for the car door, Percival grasped her wrist. "I've given this car to Brody. Let's switch to another one." "You're such a spendthrift," Vivienne chastised.

If memory served her right, this car was a recent splurge by Percival. When had he become so wasteful?

Percival, unfazed by the scolding, disdainfully shed his suit jacket, tossing it along with the car keys onto the hood of the vehicle. "Gillian's touched this car and jacket. They're tainted."

Vivienne chuckled. "All this fuss over nothing?"

"It's not nothing," Percival insisted earnestly.

Anything that other women had touched was no longer fit for his Vivienne. The thought of her being sullied by such contact was repulsive.

Vivienne nodded in agreement. "Alright, we'll do it your way."

As they spoke, Thomas wheeled up another car. "Mr. and Mrs. Ellington, shall we?" Vivienne had barely settled in when her phone rang with an unknown number.

Her number was private, and she rarely received unsolicited calls. Who could it be? After a glance at Percival, she answered on speakerphone, "Who's this?"

"Vi... Vivienne, it's really you! I'm in an M State sanatorium, I..."

"Hand it over."

Two voices came through the call, one young and anxious, the other frail and unsteady, as if recovering from a serious illness. Yet, Vivienne found the second voice oddly familiar.

"Carl?"

Carl took a moment before saying, "Yes, it's me, Vivienne. Come quickly, |..."

The line went dead before he could finish.

Vivienne redialed, but there was no response.

"Something's off. Who was that? A sanatorium in M State? Why does that ring a bell?" Vivienne frowned, perplexed. Why would Carl call her, urging her to come?

Percival had already started tracking Carl's signal, pinpointing a sanatorium in M State.

"Shall we head out of the country now?" he asked. Before Vivienne could decide, she dialed Ronald. "Vivienne, what's up?" Ronald picked up promptly. "Has Carl reached out to you? Is he awake?" Ronald paused. "Carl's awake? No call from the sanatorium. How did he get through to you?" "I'm not sure, that's why I'm asking. Haven't you heard anything?" Vivienne pressed, sensing something amiss. Ronald's tone grew somber. "I'll call the sanatorium and get back to you. Don't worry, I'll update you soon." "Okay."

After the call, Vivienne leaned back into the leather seat, h

tur geeleucenahitcsem, a chill



el from her as she pondered

ie mysterious call.

Percival took her hand. "Let's hope—this isn't the outcome we're looking for."

Vivienne lifted her gaze to meet ee deep, penetrating eyes, Nee

asmile bl omedaards: Fer o 4 radiant nd dazzling as a field of wildflowers in full spring glory.

Of course! Only Mr. Wolf truly got her. With just one glance, Mr. Wolf could decipher the whirlwind of thoughts racing through her mind.

Vivienne rolled down the car window, taking in the stream of vehicles outside with a languid ease. "Some people are just too comfortable, aren't they?"

Was it possible that her temper had mellowed since being with Mr. Wolf, leading certain people to believe she had lost her edge? How amusing! Soon after, Ronald returned her call.

"Vivienne, I've looked into it. Carl's indeed come around, but for some reason, he's been eee esa waking u The forks at

caster um are at a loss about what to do. And there's another guy hanging around him; not sure what his deal is. I've booked a flight to head over there; don't worry."

In her typically cool manner, Vivienne replied, "I'm coming with you."

"Alright, then I'll book tickets for us both."

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After hanging up the phone, Vivienne buckled her seat belt and turned to look at Percival with a serious expression. "Mr. Wolf, I want to get married!" "Alright, let's go grab some... En? What did you say?" Percival thought Vivienne was saying she was hungry and didn't quite catch her words at first. Suddenly, he felt something was off. Had he just heard his little lady say she wanted to get married? Right? That's what she said, right? His ears couldn't be deceiving him, could they? Vivienne chuckled, leaning in close to his ear, and whispered, "I said I want to get married! Don't you?" "Yes!" Percival replied, starting the car with determination, "Let's go get that license right now!" He had no idea why Vivienne would suddenly want to get married after a phone call, but he knew he couldn't wait any longer. Right here, right now, he was going to make his little lady his wife! Vivienne, "There's no need to rush!" "Of course there is! It's urgent!" Speeding up, he wished he could fly to the courthouse to get that piece of paper that was worth mere dollars but priceless in his heart. Vivienne burst into laughter. "Why are you so eager?" Percival glanced at her while keeping the speed up, "Want to find out?" "Nope!" Seeing that Percival was already driving toward the Ellington Mansion, Vivienne pinched the bridge of her nose and placed her other hand over his, saying, "What I mean is, we need to pick up the pace. The cat-and-mouse game has gone on long enough. Once we catch that poisonous rat, we'll get married!" Percival replied, "It won't affect us getting the license." Vivienne was speechless. She had shot herself in the foot by bringing up marriage out of the blue! Now, her Mr. Wolf wouldn't rest until they had that marriage license in hand! Oh well! If they were going to get married, so be it! After all, she was bound to become Mrs. Ellington sooner or later! Half an hour later, they arrived at the Ellington Mansion, and Percival dashed in to grab the necessary documents, then rushed back out. Cecilia and Richard were left bewildered. Before they could ask any questions, Percival had vanished from their sight. Richard looked at the empty doorway and asked Cecilia, "That was Percival just now, wasn't it?" Cecilia glanced toward the door, uncertain. "I think so?" It must have been, right? Richard added, "Where's he off to in such a hurry? Looked like he was holding his ID?" Cecilia thought for a moment. "He left so quickly I didn't see clearly, but it did look like an ID. Why would he need his ID all of a sudden?" Richard shook his head. "No idea." Then, he went back to enjoying his coffee. Meanwhile Percival had grabbed the necessary documents, and headed straight for the Perez household. Striding into Vivienne's room, he found her documents in no time. As for why he knew exactly where to look — he had asked Vivienne more than once about where she kept her documents, determined that if she ever agreed to marry, he would be able to retrieve them quickly, leaving no chance for second thoughts. He was grateful for his foresight! With the documents in hand, Percival left the Perez household just as briskly as he had entered. The Perez family was equally dumbfounded. Jasper was the first to speak up, "What on earth has gotten into that boy?" The others shook their heads. "No idea!" With the documents secured, Percival drove straight to the courthouse, only to find it closed — it was the weekend! Percival's face turned dark with frustration. He had anticipated every possible obstacle except for the weekend! Vivienne, trying to hide her amusement, suggested, "Looks like today's not meant to be. We'll do it when we come back from M State, okay?" "Even if it's raining knives, I'm getting that license today." With that, Percival pulled out his phone and, for the first time ever in his life, used his privileges in the government. Twenty minutes later, Percival and Vivienne stepped out of the courthouse, holding the marriage license in their hands. The sunlight shone down, highlighting the marriage license. He looked at the piece of paper in his hand and let out a sigh of relief. Finally! His little lady was now his lawful wife! Vivienne, on the other hand, was in a daze. Had she really just married herself off? Was she now a married woman? Percival embraced Vivienne, his cool lips nearing her ear, his warm breath on her face as he whispered, "Vivienne, you're mine now!" Vivienne smiled back. Impulsive as it was to get married on the spur of the moment, it felt...

surprisingly blissful. After a moment's embrace, Percival took Vivienne's hand. "Let's go!" Vivienne paused, "Where to?" "M State!" Vivienne, "Wait, aren't we going to celebrate?" Such a momentous occasion as getting married surely warranted a toast, a celebration, didn't it? "First, we take care of that poisonous rat, then we celebrate!" Percival said, leading Vivienne to the car and carefully buckling her in. He spoke with a serious tone, "I'm going to throw a grand wedding, make you the happiest bride ever!" Vivienne's lips curled into a slight smile. "Ronald has already booked the flight!" Percival hesitated for a moment. "Then we celebrate first!" Vivienne was at a loss for words.

Taking out his phone, Percival snapped a picture of the Es (i license, t en opened EE Widhott any caption, just the photo of the license, he hit the post button. Vivienne couldn't help herself; with a mischievous grin, she also posted on Facebook. Once the post was live, she turned to Percival and teased, "Now that the post's gone viral, you're in for it!" "There's no trouble greater than not having you as my wife," Percival retorted with a determined gaze. To him, the only real problem was the prospect of life without Vivienne. Everything else... Well, those were insignificant in comparison! Meanwhile, at the Perez Mansion, a roar shattered the silence of the suburban evening. "Damn it! Percival, you sneaky bastard, you've gone and whisked away my precious niece!" Maddox's bellow reverberated through the family home, sending shock waves among the relatives. Jasper, propped up by Zelda, emerged from the living room, asking in a panic, "What did you just say? Who whisked who away?" It sounded like Percival had whisked Vivienne away. Zelda, equally alarmed, pressed, "I heard you say Percival whisked Vivienne away? What in heaven's name is going on?" Maddox was fuming, his face dark as thunder. "Check your phones! Look at Percival's Facebook post. He's tricked Vivienne into getting a marriage license!"

He was livid! Sure, he had often joked about setting Percival and Vivien up, but the thought of her before being spirited away to tie the knot had him itching for retribution as if he wanted to flay Percival alive!

At that moment, the elder Perez siblings emerged, each with a grimace upon their faces. They whipped out their smartphones and saw the Facebook posts that Percival and Vivienne had shared. A chorus of curses followed as they joined Maddox in his rage, "That little punk, just you wait, I'm going to tear him limb from limb!"

## Chapter 674

Jasper was fuming, his face beet red with anger. After finally reconnecting with his estranged daughter and granddaughter, the last thing he wanted was to have his precious granddaughter, Vivienne, whisked away by some smooth-talking charmer when he wasn't looking. "This guy, Percival, always seemed decent enough, but it turns out he's sneaky as a fox!" Yuri exclaimed, shaking her head disapprovingly. Luke chimed in, determined, "We can't just let him get away with whisking Vivienne away. We need to settle the score." Leaning lazily against the wall, arms crossed, Fredrick offered a more pragmatic view. "What's there to settle? Even if you confront Percival, do you really think Vivienne, who's head over heels for him, would agree to leave him?" Vivienne: I'm not head over heels! Jasper shot Fredrick a glare. "If you've got nothing sensible to say, zip it!" Raising an eyebrow, Fredrick countered, "So what's

your plan? Force them to annul the marriage right away?" Jasper was at a loss for words. How could he, as a grandfather, encourage his own granddaughter to divorce? Nonetheless, he was still not happy with it! Fredrick clapped Jasper on the shoulder, trying to ease the tension. "Look, she's all grown up. They've got their marriage license. Instead of getting all worked up, why not focus on throwing them a proper wedding? We, the Perez family, won't let our girl be shortchanged!" Jasper snorted dismissively. "A wedding, sure. But the Ellington family is not getting off easy for tricking my granddaughter!" Maddox and Yuri nodded in agreement. Zelda sighed, the voice of reason lost in the commotion. Meanwhile, Cecilia had just woken up from a nap and, out of habit, began scrolling through Facebook. Suddenly, she came across Vivienne's post — no caption, just a photo of a marriage license. Still groggy, she scrolled past it and then saw an identical post from Percival. In a sudden burst of realization, Cecilia sat bolt upright. What did she just see? After a brief pause, she went back to Percival's post and zoomed in on the photo. There it was, clear as day: a marriage license with Percival and Vivienne's names on it. Then, she scrolled up and saw the same post from Vivienne. "Good heavens!" she gasped, tossing aside the covers and grabbing a coat on her way out. "This is huge! My son has gone and married the girl of his dreams!" Richard, having just finished his coffee, was startled by Cecilia's outcry. Clutching his chest, he exclaimed, "What in the world are you shouting about?" Breathless, Cecilia thrust her phone at Richard. "Dad, look! Percival and Vivienne got their marriage license!" Richard, initially stunned, suddenly burst into laughter. "Haha! That's my grandson for you—bold and decisive! Just like I was back in the day. You've got to move fast when you find the right woman or some other chap might swoop in!" Reminiscing, Richard boasted to Cecilia, "You know, I did the same with your mother. Baron Brooks was always hovering, waiting to whisk her away. I had to be cunning and got the license first to keep Baron at bay." Cecilia could only roll her eyes. Why did Richard sound so proud about it? Richard handed the phone back and began making plans. "It's been ages since we've had a celebration. Let's start with a family feast tonight, and tomorrow, we can discuss wedding dates with the Perez family. We'll make sure Vivienne's wedding is grand." Cecilia nodded in agreement, her heart swelling with joy at her son's milestone. "And don't forget to invite Dorian's family. They should be involved in setting the date," Richard added, referring to Dorian Hawthorne and Cordelia Wilson. Cecilia smiled. "Don't worry, Dad. I know. They've treated Vivienne well all her life. Although her mother has returned, they're still her parents to her. As her mother-in-law, I won't forget them." Richard nodded, content, and headed upstairs to get ready for the celebration. At the same time, the news had set the Emerald Monastery disciples' chat groups ablaze. [Dude, Percival went and got a marriage license with Vivienne!] [That sneaky dog! He didn't even propose properly!] [The nerve! No ceremony, no proposal, just off they go!] [Leopold, why the silent treatment? Did you have a hand in Percival eloping with Vivienne?] Leopold, who had been staring at the group chat without daring to utter a word, finally replied, [I'm being framed! I knew nothing!] And he truly was innocent! Heaven knows what went through his mind when he opened his phone to find Percival and Vivienne's marriage license all over Facebook! But what could he say? One was his best buddy, the other his dear senior! No matter what he said, it wouldn't be right! As the senior disciples cursed a blue streak in the chat, all he wanted was to be invisible! [I don't think you're innocent at all] Leopold: [...]

The chat was a war zone until Jerry finally spoke up. [Shut i Everyanel I shopid be Rady for Vivienne. She's with the guy she loves!] [Jerry, when did Percival buy you off?] Jerry couldn't be bothered with

them and replied, [One more word, and you're all copying the Bible a hundred times!] Silence fell upon the group. Out in the quiet Rivenwood suburb, in a quaint little farmhouse.

Vivienne was blissfully munching on the steak Percival had ie geifledi( 1) W Wolf yourieéakin skills are i fois. I'm gonna get chubby at this rate." Percival placed another perfectly cooked patty on the plate, chuckling. "A little chubbiness won't hurt. You're too skinny."

Vivienne picked up another steak, her face bright with a softsyajle Their | AON esflayBeditie'the table, screens flashing incessantly. Glancing at her phone, Vivienne mused, "Vanishing like this... it's a bit rogue, isn't it?"

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As their post on Facebook went live, their phones began to explode with notifications, buzzing incessantly without a moment's pause. If not for the fear of missing something crucial, Percival was tempted to just switch his phone off. Sitting next to Vivienne, he poured her a glass of water and whispered, "No worries, I'm tough. I can take a hit." Vivienne chuckled. "I won't let you get hit!" Percival freed one hand to ruffle Vivienne's hair, his smile brightening in the sunlight, "You're the best, Vivienne." After lunch, Vivienne lounged on the patio swing, taking in the view of the backyard. The yard was simple and tidy, with a patch dedicated to a variety of herbs next to the gate. Flowers of all sorts surrounded the herb garden, and in its center stood a swing set and a stone table. The wicker chair was positioned under the shade of a willow, and as the breeze brushed by, Vivienne felt a sense of peace. She had spent ten years at Emerald Mountain, isolated and with little contact with the outside world, consumed only by vengeance. But now, she was living the life she had longed for. Vivienne turned to look at Percival, who was tidying up in the open kitchen, her smile impossible to hide. "Mr. Wolf, when did you set up this lovely place? How come you never mentioned it?" "After we moved to Rivenwood, | started looking around. A farmhouse like this is easy to find, but it took a while to find one that was both tranquil and had a nice environment." Percival came out of the kitchen and sat in the wicker chair beside her, his long fingers entwining with hers. "The previous owner, a centenarian, passed away, and his son wanted to sell it to leave Rivenwood. So, | bought it." The farmhouse had been the home of an old couple who had lived together through thick and thin, from their youthful days of struggle to their secluded retirement in the countryside. What Percival envied most was their unwavering love right up to the end. He wanted to grow old with Vivienne, just like them. Hence, he had bought the farmhouse, hoping some of that old couple's good fortune would rub off on him and Vivienne, allowing them to live the life they wanted. Lifting Vivienne's hand, he kissed her delicate skin and murmured, "Vivienne, | know you love peace and quiet. | wanted to wait until we are older to settle here, but | couldn't wait to bring you. After we catch that poisonous rat, let's live here, just us, our own life." Vivienne already adored the farmhouse, and Percival's words only deepened her affection. "This is the life I've always wanted." They lay on the lounge chairs, chatting and enjoying the cool breeze, and without realizing it, they drifted off to sleep. Suddenly, Vivienne sat up with a start, her forehead crashing into Percival's nose. Percival, clutching his nose, looked at her helplessly. "Mara!" She exclaimed. Rubbing Vivienne's head, Percival asked, "What about her?" "She told me this morning that her brother Huxley Boyd has been locked up in a sanatorium in M State. The guy with Carl must be Huxley," Vivienne said. "Let's go

see Mara," Percival decided. Their plans to stay at the farmhouse overnight were thus abruptly changed. Percival had drunk at lunch and couldn't drive, so he called Thomas to pick them up. Soon enough, Thomas arrived, and they drove towards the hospital. Midway, a flashy red sports car suddenly appeared out of nowhere, blocking the road. Thomas's face was stone cold as he said, "Percival, we've got company." Percival shielded Vivienne. "Let's check it out." Thomas unbuckled his seat belt and stepped out to investigate. He tapped on the car window, but the man inside was unresponsive. Frowning and on high alert from years of combat experience, Thomas gestured a warning to Percival inside the car, then opened the door. As soon as the door swung open, a sharp steel knife thrust out, aiming for Thomas's throat. Thomas dodged swiftly, grabbed the wrist wielding the knife, and yanked the man out of the car. They scuffled briefly, but it was clear the man was no match for Thomas, who floored him with ease. But as Thomas subdued his opponent, the man's head bizarrely detached, spilling blood onto the street. Bystanders screamed and retreated in horror, having never witnessed such a gruesome sight—a living person decapitated in broad daylight! Thomas himself was stunned, not just because he hadn't exerted much force but because, even if he had, no man's head should pop off so easily. But he quickly realized something was amiss. This was no human! It was an android! Percival and Vivienne, having exited the car, looked down at the deactivated android with cold eyes. Then, amid the commotion, cries for help were heard.

Turning, Vivienne saw a woman relentlessly attacking a man kicking him on the legs. The man was on the verge of passing out from the pain. A few people tried to intervene, but the woman had a weapon and swung it at anyone who came close. Vivienne sprang into action, snapping the woman's arm in one swift motion. The woman's arm instantly detached with a crack. After the initial shock of the decapitation, the crowd was less surprised this time. They were completely numb to the violence. Suddenly, a rogue motorcycle burst onto the scene, recklessly tearing through the crowd.

Percival sprinted into action, bounding across the rooftops of the three parked cars. He pinned the motorcycle to the ground with a forceful grip. The rider was snapped in half at the waist, crumbling into two pieces in an instant.

With a powerful kick, Percival extinguished the engine of the motorcycle before coming to a halt on the pavement. Cradling the upper half of the rider in one arm, Percival announced, "It's a fake." All three of the suddenly violent assailants turned out to be androids. Vivienne furrowed her brows in confusion. How could there suddenly be three rogue androids on the loose? Just then, Thomas' phone rang. It was Leopold. "The hospital's overrun with attackers—damn it, we can barely keep them at bay! They're of all ages, both men and women!" Percival's phone buzzed as well, with a call from the office. "Mr. Ellington, a mob of strangers has invaded the company premises. They're wreaking havoc—smashing and hitting people! What should we do?"

## Chapter 676

Vivienne's phone buzzed insistently, matching the urgency of Aaron's voice on the other end. "Vivienne, Elite University's gone haywire. A bunch of thugs outta nowhere setting fires, wounding folks. It's

chaos!" "Everyone, stay frosty," Vivienne commanded, her voice steady as she addressed the trio on the line. "Keep an eye out if they're androids. If you spot them, don't hesitate to smash them to bits!" "Understood!" Unison agreement crackled through the phone, quickly followed by the sounds of a scuffle. The situation was swiftly brought under control. The media was ablaze, both TV and online, with reports of rampaging robots. The incident was huge, engulfing the city as nearly every one got dragged into the fray. Even Percival's and Vivienne's attempts to scrub the feeds were futile. The concept of androids, which many had relegated to the stuff of movies, now confronted them in reality. To the average Joe, a robot was nothing more than a novelty to chuckle at. But now, lifelike androids roamed the streets, mistaken for flesh and blood, until Vivienne peeled back their synthetic skin to reveal the mechanics beneath. Panic seized the Brooks Group, the Churchill Group, and the Pendleton Group. Even their employees were clueless about how the robots broke loose. Androids required pre-programmed instructions to function, yet these were fresh from the warehouse, never programmed for chaos. Vivienne's exclusive chat group about bionics was in an uproar—Zachary Churchill: [Madam, what's the play? Folks are freaking out, saying robots will rule the world soon and we're headed for a machine age. We can't contain the online wildfire!] William Pendleton: [Yeah, and Vanguard Agency wants a sit-down tomorrow. This meltdown smells fishy like it was all premeditated.] Ronald Brooks: [I'm with you, Vivienne. This stinks of a setup!] Vivienne's face was a mask of ice as she commanded, [I need you three here, now.] Her android project had always been under wraps, even from Vanguard Agency. It was her exclusive project, her baby. Ronald replied, [Got it, Vivienne. What about Carl?] Vivienne's eyes narrowed. [I've got someone else on Carl. You're the head honcho of Brooks Group, Ronald. You've gotta be on the ground for this.] Ronald: [Understood. Thanks.] Vivienne rang up Larry, instructing him to head straight to the sanatorium in M State and bring Carl and Huxley back. He was the closest, the logical choice for a swift retrieval. Soon, Zachary, William, and Ronald arrived. "Madam," Zachary burst out as he entered, "we've traced the androids. They walked right out of our warehouses." "Indeed," William added, "and they're the first batch. Nothing on the security cams." Ronald, grim-faced, knew the gravity. "Vivienne, could this be a setup to expose the androids? Feels like we're being targeted." Vivienne shook her head. "It's not you three—it's me." Silence fell. They were her lieutenants, the project her brainchild. With the crisis unfolding, the buck stopped with her. Zachary clenched his fists. "Madam, this is too suspicious. Let us handle the interrogations." William nodded. "Exactly. We can take the heat and disappear into some black site to clear things up. But if you're implicated, no one will uncover the truth." Ronald agreed. "Right. We'll stick to the story—it's got nothing to do with you." Vivienne smiled wryly. "Even if you clam up, the Vanguard Agency will come knocking. They're not idiots. Sure, we're tight here in Rivenwood, but HQ will send someone. We owe them that courtesy." "But if all four of us are in the hot seat, who's gonna manage the mess?" Ronald fretted. "There are others," Vivienne replied, tapping her fingers languidly on the chair's edge. Her voice was lazy, her eyes shadowed, her thoughts inscrutable. Over at Vanguard Agency, Vance was catching heat from HQ. The robot rampage had sent shock waves beyond Rivenwood, stirring a national frenzy. Despite Vivienne and Percival's efforts to minimize the fallout, the task was Sisyphean, the web of complicity too vast. By the time they neutralized the rogue machines, the story was already viral.

"Vance! These damn synthetic robots—you assured me they were foolproof! What's this mess? ole) y; {ofeelm ROME and you botched it! Use your head for once!" Webster's tirade was as much about damage control as it was about frustration; the societal impact was undeniable.

Vance never imagined the situation would escalate so much. "Come on, Director, you know full well the king's red mares and Percival legend if I wanted to get my hands on that patent, I'd need the magic touch—which I don't have. Why not grill Micah about it? He's the one who mentored Percival." "Don't you start passing the buck! Rivenwood General Administration has already been reprimanded once. I'm warning you, if you don't get a handle on this mess, you can kiss your position as Director goodbye!" Webster hung up with a click. Vance massaged his temples and looked up at Vivienne, who was meticulously picking out a piece of orange-flavored candy. "You heard, didn't you?" Finally satisfied with her choice, Vivienne popped the candy into her mouth. "Loud and clear. You guys are still after my patent, huh?"

Vance removed his glasses, a sign of exasperation. "It's not about what I want. It's that this time, you've really RPE pYer RUS here. Is this invention that important to you? You don't even care about making money from it. If you leave it with me, won't cause trouble. What's there to worry about?" Vivienne raised an eyebrow. "Do you really not remember how F-Poison slipped through our fingers last time?" Vance fell silent. Indeed, F-Poison and previous spy organizations had their eyes on bionic robots. If GTO got a hold of it, it wouldn't just spark social panic—it could spell disaster for the entire world. Before long, every criminal Vanguard Agency apprehended would be suspected of being an android while the real GTO criminals roamed free. Wouldn't that turn everything upside down? "But how do you plan to deal with this predicament?"

## Chapter 677

Vivienne scoffed with a smirk. "Pray tell, Vance, what national treasure has been harmed by the rogue android? Who's been injured? Or was there a threat to someone's life?" Vance cleared his throat. "No national assets were damaged, no one was injured, and there wasn't any life-threatening situation, but..." "The only one hurt here is my Mr. Wolf, who's still got a bloody nose! All because he jumped in to save that runaway motorcycle. Instead of a pat on the back, you're thinking of punishment?" Listening to Vivienne's clever, if slightly twisted, logic, Vance sighed heavily. "It was his duty, a remedy for the mess your company made!" Vivienne nodded in agreement. "We've made amends, and quite successfully at that. Repaired roads, hospitals, schools, and the like, all out of our own pocket. We've more than made up for it, wouldn't you say, Vance?" Vivienne's retort left Vance speechless. She sort of had a point. Vance took a sip of water. "Alright, you can go." Vivienne snatched a few more candy bars from the dish. "Catch you later, Mr. Vance Edwards!" Vance couldn't help but chuckle "Hold on, when's your mom waking up?" "Not sure yet. When she does, I'll be sure to tell her you were asking about her," Vivienne said, waving her hand as she walked out of the directors office. Vance shook his head in resignation as Webster's call came through again. "Director, the guy got hurt and even shelled out the cash; what more do you want? Percival's nose is still bleeding! His face is insured for more than movie star Stephen Harris. If we get nitpicky, we can't afford the payout!" "Fine, you guys do what you want with that mess!" Vivienne walked out of Vanguard Agency to find William, Zachary, and Ronald still in the midst of routine inquiries. It seemed it would take a while. Vivienne had some disciples from the Nine Mystics Society stand guard at the door, ready to escort people out when they were done. Afterward, she drove to the hospital. Inside, Percival was getting patched up. Leopold leaned in, "So your nose really got busted saving that motorbike?" Percival shot him a sideways glance. "You got a



problem with that?" Leopold quickly waved his hands. "No, no, just... Haha." Good lord, this was Percival, the same guy who had once spent days in a mine without a scratch, and now a motorcycle had taken him down? Percival ignored him, looking at the bandage on his nose in the mirror, heaving a sigh. How come Vivienne's skull had to be so hard? Just then, Vivienne burst in, arms laden with a feast fit for kings. "Mr. Wolf, dinner is served." At the sound of Vivienne's voice, Percival instantly ripped off the bandage from his nose. Bleeding or not, looking good for his lady was paramount! Leopold was cracking up on the side. Since when did Percival become so vain? He absolutely had to spread this tale throughout the Vanguard Agency—Percival might have left, but his legend would live on! But... Leopold felt he seemed to have forgotten something important. Suddenly, he stood up, shouting, "You two sneaks! Getting married without a peep, disappearing without a trace. Do you have any idea how many people are going crazy?" He had been trying to reach Percival and Vivienne since morning to no avail. Then the android incident happened, and it slipped his mind. Those heartless two — they had gone off to enjoy their bliss, oblivious to the frenzy they had left behind in the Perez, Ellington, and Brooks families, not to mention the disciples of the Emerald Monastery. Not just Percival's phone was blowing up — so was his. Everyone thought he knew where Percival and Vivienne were. But damn... he had not the faintest idea! The calmest person was Thomas, who took the news of the nuptials as expected and even had the audacity to say something infuriating. "If it were me, I'd have whisked my love away to get hitched ages ago. Percival's too slow." After Thomas said that, he got a good thrashing from his Vanguard Agency teammates! Meanwhile, Percival and Vivienne acted as if it was just another day. Percival glanced at Leopold. "You went crazy, too?" Leopold retorted, "Do you hear yourself?" "Am I deaf?" Leopold was speechless. Great. He couldn't deal with someone who could insult even himself. Vivienne sat across from Percival, frowning as she saw him remove the bandage. Then, she pulled out another one from her pocket and stuck it on his nose — this one adorned with a cartoon character. "Your nose hasn't healed yet. Who said you could take off the bandage?" Percival didn't protest, nor did he see the cartoon on the bandage, as he took the feast from Vivienne's hands. Unbeknownst to him, the image of his nose bandaged with a cartoon character's behind was already circulating on Facebook, thanks to Leopold. "How are things at the Vanguard Agency?" Vivienne munched on a candy bar, lounging on the sofa, "Found out what that sneaky mole looks like." Percival offered a wry smile. "They could never escape their fate." Vivienne shrugged, a dark glint crossing her elegant face. "My bad, got careless." Percival ruffled her hair gently. "No worries, let him gloat for a while." Vivienne nodded with determination. "Yeah, I want to see what other aces he's got up his sleeve."

Beside her, Leopold was as lost as a ball in high weeds, clueless about that they were idling, his mind swarming with question marks. Catching his bewildered look, Vivienne nudged him with her foot. "Hey, give Larry a call, will ya? Check if he's met up with the guy."

Leopold hurriedly slurped down a few more spoonfuls of his spaghetti and then he had to answer the phone to Larry, before whipping out his phone to dial Larry's number. But the ringtone droned on endlessly with no answer. "That son of a gun, dodging my calls!" Leopold cursed under his breath. "When I get my hands on him, I swear I'll tan his hide!" Vivienne arched an eyebrow, a smirk dancing on her lips. "You talk tough like that to his face, and I'll give you a medal." Leopold clammed up at that, redialing without

success. "Vivienne, he's ghosting me. Maybe he'll pick up if you call?" Vivienne pulled out her own cell and dialed, but just like before, there was no answer.

Both Vivienne and Leopold's expressions soured at this. On a moment's notice, VINE tried again, only to be met with the same silent treatment. Leopold, on edge, pushed himself to his feet, ignoring the twinge in his bad knee. "What's going on? He's not even picking up for you!" In their circle, skipping out on a call from Finnian might fly now and then, but ignoring Vivienne? That was a cardinal sin. Their phones were tweaked by Vivienne herself, designed to catch a signal in the back of beyond, ensuring they could always be reached. There was only one reason they would be hitting a wall with call after call like this. Something had happened to Larry.

## Chapter 678

Vivienne's brow furrowed with concern as she reached out to the other junior disciples. Larry was in trouble, and they needed to rally immediately! Soon enough, the disciples gathered at the hospital. The sight of Percival made their blood boil, each itching to deliver a swift punch, but Larry's well-being was paramount. With a collective glare at Percival, they turned their attention to Vivienne. Dawson had been the last to speak with Larry. "Vivienne, didn't he say he was heading up to the M State sanatorium to pick up your protégé? How did he go off the grid?" "No idea. We can't reach the sanatorium, and Draven's already headed there with a team. Everyone, stay sharp—we're too close to cracking this case to slip up now." The disciples nodded in unison. "Got it!" Vivienne delegated key positions to her crew; they were on the lookout for any sign of Larry, Carl, or Huxley. Leopold, still nursing his injuries, was relegated to base camp at the hospital. After scouring every news outlet, Leopold finally had something. "Vivienne, I found out why the sanatorium went dark." "What happened?" Vivienne asked, her voice steady but laced with tension. "Last night, there was a violent robbery. The thieves cut all communications and set the place ablaze after they were done. Local cops didn't get wind of it till dawn. By the time they arrived, the sanatorium was ashes." Percival frowned. "That sanatorium's isolated, but not isolated enough to be burned down without anyone noticing." "Apparently, someone jammed the police frequencies. The station missed several distress calls," Leopold handed over the news report to Vivienne and Percival. Vivienne closed her laptop, her eyes smoldering with barely contained fury. This was it—the last straw. Her phone rang. It was Ronald. "Talk to me." "Vivienne, trouble. Got a call from M State. The sanatorium had gone up in flames, I..." "How are you handling things? Any trouble from Vanguard Agency?" Vivienne asked, her tone eerily calm. Only Percival and Leopold knew this calmness was the eye of her storm. "They're not making it easy, but we're out. Heading to the warehouse to check on things, though the agency has everything locked down. Not sure what to do next." "Head to the warehouse. Leave Carl to me." "Okay. I'll deal with the lockdown and then head to M State. Dad's already on his way." Ronald paused, his voice choking up. "Vivienne, thank you. We'd be lost without you." A shadow of a smile crossed Vivienne's lips, a dangerous glint in her eyes. "We're family. No need for thanks." After hanging up, Vivienne tapped her phone, planning her next move. She stood up, placing a hand on Percival's shoulder. "Mr. Wolf, I could use your help." Percival took her hand, pressing a light kiss to the back of it. "It would be my honor." Meanwhile, in the underbelly of M State, Larry was at his wit's end. "If you don't stop crying, I swear I'll turn you into coal dust!" he threatened the sniveling figure beside him. Carl, weak as he was, tried to mediate. "He's just a kid. What's the use in getting mad?" "He's twenty for crying out loud!" Larry groaned, sitting down in frustration. "Huxley, one

more peep, and I'm leaving you here to mine coal!" Huxley stifled his sobs, muttering, "We're in a sewer, not a mine." Larry was about to explode when Carl intervened. "Let's focus on getting out of here. We don't even have a phone. How do we contact Vivienne?" Swallowing hard, Carl felt a wave of dizziness—he had barely recovered before their frantic escape. Larry handed Carl a life-saving pill. "I left signals along the way. Let's hope the Nine Mystics Society finds them. Now we wait." Back at the hospital, Faye Churchill and Charlotte Redwood came to visit Anna. "How did you get so banged up? It's been weeks, hasn't it?" Charlotte sat by Anna, horrified at the sight of her bandages. "You're not going to scar, are you?" "No," Anna reassured, folding a paper crane with a distant focus. Faye nodded in agreement. "Ms. Vivienne is the Specter Healer. She fixed me up; she'll take care of Anna." Charlotte blinked, taking Anna's hands in hers. "Since when did you start with these girly crafts?" Back at Havenwood, Anna was an enigma to her classmates, only growing closer to them through Vivienne's influence at Rivenwood.

In the impression of Charlotte and others, Anna did not even have a idea of what Pape; Grariés ers let sorearidkéthem It was unimaginable for her to start folding paper cranes after an injury. Anna blushed, her folding growing frantic. "Just killing time." But for those who knew her, it was a peculiar change indeed.

Faye seemed unfazed, but Charlotte, that clever imp, had other ideas. She picked up on the faj blush. GO Toe Just killing, huh? Why do | get the feeling that for someone, it's more like spring has sprung in the heart department?" Anna ducked her head even lower, finally just tucking the origami she had been working on under the covers. "Don't talk "I'm not talking nonsense. Come on, who are these paper cranes for, huh?" Charlotte pinned Anna's hands and leaned in close, locking eyes with her. Anna was never good at lying, and under Charlotte's intense gaze, she was at a loss for words, her face turning so red it looked like it might start bleeding. Faye stepped in to smooth things over. "Charlotte, cut it out. Is it so bad that Anna has a crush? | thought no guy would ever catch her eye."

Charlotte backed off at that, plopping down in a chair with a cH yea two and qryshes, Srhast be nice. Mo RR 1 the beat of a different drum—I've got my eyes on more than one guy!" Anna looked up at Faye with questioning eyes, clearly asking—who? Faye choked, waving her hands dismissively. "Don't mind her blabbering. I'm not into anyone." "Bull! You're practically betrothed!"

## Chapter 679

Faye puckered her lips and scoffed dismissively. "It's just for convenience, you know. I've only met Carl a handful of times. It was his uncle Scott and my dad who arranged our marriage from the start. We were bound to be linked by marriage sooner or later, so we figured we might as well choose someone we knew. That was the deal between us. Besides, Carl had a thing for Calista and almost called off our engagement. It was only his brother Ronald who stepped in and stopped him." Charlotte, always keen for some juicy gossip, prodded further. "How do you know it was Ronald who stopped him, not Carl himself wanting to stay engaged?" "Are you kidding? He was head over heels for Calista at the time. There's no way he wanted to stay engaged. He told me himself that Ronald convinced him to stick it out for the sake of the Brooks family, suggesting that eventually, he'd break off the engagement with me."

"Pfft, I never realized Ronald was such a smooth talker. Now that his brother's in a coma, I don't see him pushing to call off the engagement. When exactly was he planning to do that?" Just outside the door, Zachary happened to pass by and overheard Faye's conversation, his expression growing even more somber. He didn't knock but instead went to find Vivienne. "Madam, the warehouse has been unsealed, but they still took two robots from each of our warehouses for sampling and investigation," he reported. Vivienne was already aware of the situation. "Let them take their samples. I suspect that's their real objective anyway." "But, Madam," Zachary continued, "while questioning the agents, I managed to get a look at the serial numbers of the malfunctioning robots. They were all defective models that should have been destroyed long ago. There's definitely a mole inside our organization. I suspect..." "Just focus on what you're doing; I'm on top of it," Vivienne cut in. Reassured, Zachary agreed. "Alright, I'll follow your lead. And about Carl — do you need my help? I have some influence in M State; maybe I could find him." "No need. Someone's already on it." Vivienne's smile was cryptic as she dismissed the topic. Meanwhile, in a secluded manor in Rivenwood, Dracon sat staring out the window. This was Linklater territory, where no one dared to intrude; not even Vivienne or Percival's reach could extend here. Soon after, a man in a dark suit entered, carrying a bottle of fine red wine. Dracon sneered without turning his head. "What's this? F-Poison too scared to show up on Linklater turf? Coward." The man wasn't ruffled; he calmly opened the red wine and poured it into a decanter, saying, "A married woman can't simply come out to meet Mr. Linklater alone." Dracon scoffed again. "You RST folks sure know how to play. Which number are you in her list of men?" "Mr. Linklater, I am not yet married," the man responded, maintaining a genteel smile as he faced Dracon. Dracon felt an inexplicable chill, an ominous pressure that unsettled him. Straightening up, he demanded, "Out with it. What do you want?" The man's grin deepened. "We know you want nothing more than to rescue Ms. Diana from Vivienne's clutches. We have located Diana." At the mention of Diana's name, Dracon's eyes lit up. "You found Diana? Where is she? Is she alright? Has Vivienne been troubling her?" The man casually cut into his steak as if slicing through Dracon's patience. Growing anxious, Dracon grabbed the man's wrist. "I'm talking to you. Are you deaf?" With a swift move, the man flipped his hand, driving the steak knife toward Dracon's hand. Dracon jerked back just in time to avoid injury. Glaring at the man in shock, Dracon heard him say, "Mr. Linklater, we have a partnership. GTO is not at your service." Dracon swallowed hard and asked again, "Where is Diana?" The man chuckled, dabbing his lips with a napkin. "There's a little issue with Percival lately. If you could... take care of him for us, then I could share Diana's whereabouts. What do you say?" Dracon frowned. "If Percival was so easy to deal with, would you still be having trouble with him?" The man wagged a finger. "You managed to send Gillian to Vanguard Agency. Dealing with Percival should be simple for you. Here's a hint." Dracon listened intently as the man continued, "Percival recently visited Yorick, remember? He even brought some gifts." Watching the man leave, Dracon was torn. After all, Yorick was his father. As the man got into his car, he dialed F-Poison. "Yes, but I doubt he's got the guts for it." Poisoning his biological father wasn't something done lightly.

And besides, Dracon was, in essence, a bit of a lost cause — all he bite. If he had the mere risk it all HOW'S be in the predicament of relying on his father just to survive. F-Poison's laughter came through the phone. "It's when a lost cause is cornered that they might find the courage to act." Often, to prove themselves, they challenge what they fear most. And for Dracon, the quintessential lost cause, his greatest fear was his father — that untouchable figure looming over him. Listening to F-Poison's words, a chuckle couldn't help but escape the man's lips. "Well then, I guess I'll have to add fuel to the fire."

The moment Dracon stepped through the front door, a palpable tension greeted him. His father, Yorick, sat brooding in the living room, casting a somber glance as his son entered.

"Dad, why are you still up at this hour? What's the matter?" Dracon asked, feeling @iCBHAYE with a quilt, unsure of how to confront his father. Yorick stood up, his movements slow but deliberate, and approached Dracon. Without warning, he delivered a sharp slap across his son's face. Despite nearing his centennial, Yorick's strength had not waned in the slightest. Dracon was sent sprawling to the floor, gazing up at his father in disbelief. Yorick barked, "For years, you've been riding on my coattails, throwing your weight around town!" "Dad, what are you talking about? I don't understand," Dracon stammered, retreating a few steps, his anxiety mounting.

Over the years, Dracon had exploited Yorick's reputation to line his pockets, seize business opportunities, and gain unfettered advantage, less aware of the talents of his brothers; if he didn't capitalize on his father's influence while the old man was still around, his future looked bleak. So he opted to pad his wallet while he was young — that was the only way to ensure he had a fighting chance at a bright future.

## Chapter 680

Yorick was so incensed he felt like giving another kick, but age had taken its toll. Even slapping had drained him of his strength, so he slumped back onto the couch, panting. "Don't play dumb with me, boy. It was one thing when you were just making a quick buck here and there, nothing serious. But now you've gone and meddled with Vanguard Agency's affairs! You've got some nerve! Do you have any idea why I introduced Gillian to Lark and Vivienne?" Dracon stood up silently, his head bowed, avoiding Yorick's piercing gaze. Yorick took a breath to calm himself. "I wanted Lark and Vivienne to keep tabs on her! A criminal, sneaking her way into Vanguard Agency, knowing all my likes and dislikes without ever having met me. Dracon, you think I'm senile, don't you? You think you can just waltz Gillian into Vanguard Agency? I orchestrated that! I wanted her under Vanguard's control! But I underestimated you. You interfered with my liaison with Vanguard Agency and, using my name, sent Gillian back after her blunder. If Percival hadn't come to warn me, I'd still be in the dark! Do you have any idea the gravity of Gillian's crimes?" Dracon furrowed his brow, still playing the tough guy. "Dad, since when do you take Percival's word as gospel?" "If I didn't have proof, would I be confronting you now?" Yorick flung the dossier from the table at Dracon's face. After Percival left the other day, Yorick silently began an investigation. When he found out it was indeed Dracon who had saved Gillian, it nearly triggered his heart condition. He had thought his son merely dull, but this was pure folly! Foolish to the bone! "I'm telling you, Dracon, if you use my name again, you can pack your bags and leave! I can't believe the Linklater family could produce such a failure!" Yorick, unable to hold back his words in his fury, spun around and stormed back to his room. Dracon stood there, the scattered papers on the floor mirroring the throbbing pain on his face, a constant reminder of his humiliation. Fine, he was the failure of the Linklater family. But let's see what this 'failure' could do. The Nine Mystics Society. Vivienne arrived at headquarters, where all the leaders, including Aaron, were gathered. "Vivienne, we've secured all transportation. Our people are in place, eyes on the target, ready to strike on your command," Aaron reported. Vivienne eyed the red dots on the tablet, each representing the Nine Mystics Society's

outposts. "Good. Await my signal. Once we've located Larry and Carl, we'll take them down in one fell swoop!" Everyone echoed, "Understood!" Just then, Vivienne's cell phone rang. It was Thomas. "Trouble, Madam. Percival's been taken by the Vanguard Agency!" Vivienne's brow knitted. "What happened?" "Yorick was rushed to the hospital this morning with a heart attack. He's still in the ER. According to Dracon, it was the health supplement Percival delivered that caused the episode. The authorities found traces of a new drug, Keco, from the Ashford family's bust in the supplement!" Vivienne's fury coalesced into an icy resolve. "Got it." Hanging up, Vivienne turned to her team with a dark expression. "Get ready. We're breaking him out." At the hospital, Dracon was a sobbing mess outside the ER. "Doctor, please save my father. Nothing can happen to him!" "Rest assured, Mr. Linklater, we're doing everything we can." Vance and the others rushed over. "What's going on?" Dracon wiped away tears. "Ask Percival why he poisoned my dad. Didn't you interrogate him?" "If Percival is responsible, we won't let him off," Micah said, concerned. "But it seems unlikely he could smuggle such an obvious drug past the Linklater family's famously tight security." Micah had deep doubts about this incident. He would believe Percival poisoning him more than him poisoning Yorick. Percival respected Yorick more than anyone in this world. It was absolutely impossible for him to poison Yorick! Dracon lashed out in embarrassment. "What are you suggesting? That I poisoned my father to frame Percival? I know you Vanguard folks are tight with him, but with a situation like this, you're just going to cover for him?" Vance retorted, "Mr. Linklater, those are serious accusations. Percival is in custody, and we're investigating. No conclusions yet. If he's guilty, he won't escape justice. But if he's innocent, we won't wrong him either." Dracon, not wanting to escalate further, left it at that. Vance and Micah exchanged looks and settled down to wait outside the ER for the doctor's verdict. Eventually, the ER lights dimmed, and the doctor emerged, wheeling an unconscious Yorick into the ICU for continued monitoring. "He's stable for now, but when he'll wake up is still uncertain. We'll do our best." Crouched on the ground, Dracon clutched his face in agony. Suddenly, a deep voice boomed from behind. "Dracon." Startled, Dracon stiffened while Vance and Micah turned their heads in surprise.

There stood a strapping man in a tailored suit, sporting a pair of gold-rimmed glasses and a slicked-back hairstyle. His gaze was penetrating, and he exuded an aura of unapproachability. Dracon rose to his feet and took a couple of strides forward. "Hector, you're back!" The newcomer was none other than Dracon's younger brother, the third Linklater son, Hector Linklater! Micah clicked his tongue in realization; no wonder the man looked familiar. It finally dawned on him who this was. A diplomat often seen on TV, Hector's directives were well-known throughout the entire Vanguard Agency. During Micah's time on the front-lines, he had been involved in several international operations, all orchestrated by Hector himself. Vance couldn't help but sigh. It was clear why this man was always rubbing shoulders with the top brass. Just standing there, he commanded respect like a true leader. Hector had an air about him that Dracon could never match, reminiscent of their father, Yorick, in his younger days. This was indeed the presence of a Linklater son!

Hector stepped forward and took hold of Dracon's arm. "Alright, the deal with DAI NEWS is fine when Astin How did he suddenly fall critically ill?"

"It's all because of that damn Percival. He had the nerve to PaisaR our father! And tp3hjn ad frites th  
rcoi bith as his successor. He couldn't have been more mistaken," Dracon spat out bitterly.