

Million-Dollar 691

Chapter 691

Vivienne had barely finished her tale when Percival, ever the considerate one, handed her an insulated travel mug. "Here, Vivienne, take a sip of water before you go on."

He had never heard Vivienne talk so much at once; he didn't want her to wear herself out.

Gratefully, Vivienne accepted the mug, flashed him a quick smile, and took a drink before turning her gaze back to Samantha. This time, she didn't continue. She simply waited for Samantha to speak.

Inside, Samantha felt as though her world had been turned upside down.

She thought that even if Vivienne had found her way here today, there was no way she could have known their true purpose. But, it turned out, Vivienne knew everything.

Damn it!

How could she possibly have found out? This was a secret kept between her and Francis. No one else should have known. Samantha remained silent for several minutes before finally speaking, "I just want to know how you figured it out."

She couldn't fathom it, couldn't accept it. She had lived her life as a mastermind, and now she was being outplayed by a little girl.

Even at ninety, Samantha was a genius, her learning ability astoundingly powerful. She had easily adapted to the high-tech era they were living in, swiftly integrating into modern life. She had always believed that with her mind, outwitting a young woman in her twenties would be a piece of cake.

Vivienne laughed, a radiant, almost blinding smile. "I guessed!" She had truly guessed.

After the incident with the androids, she had pondered one thing: it had initially been her chasing F-Poison, but then she realized it was them chasing her. The enemy was in plain sight, yet she couldn't quite catch them.

So, the night before they found Ronald, she sequestered herself for an all-nighter. The whole night, she didn't sleep, connecting all the dots in her mind, replaying every event.

Percival had done the same that night. Waking up the next day, he was already waiting at her door. They exchanged a knowing smile, and everything became clear.

The only things they couldn't guess or uncover were the identity of the man secretly involved with Samantha and the mysterious, red-dressed woman who had appeared recently.

Samantha nearly choked on her own fury, clutching at her chest as she protested, "I don't believe you!" How could someone guess their way to this much information?

She refused to believe it. Not one bit.

Vivienne raised an eyebrow. "I'm a genius. You don't have to believe it, but that doesn't change anything." Thomas and Leopold exchanged glances, speechless.

Was it really the time for self-flattery?

Vivienne: Are you sure I'm just flattering myself?

Thomas and Leopold jolted: No, you're definitely a genius!

That was the last straw for Samantha; she literally spat out blood.

Vivienne turned back to Percival, her tone laced with a hint of helplessness. "How did she manage RST for so many years with such a low tolerance? They've been playing me for so long. | feel like my IQ has been dragged through the mud!"

Percival tenderly stroked her hair, a doting look in his eyes. "Well, from now on, we can step on them as we please, grind them into the dirt whenever we wish."

"That's the spirit!" Vivienne chuckled.

After their brief moment of levity, Vivienne looked back at Samantha. "Anything else you want to ask? I'm all ears. Before you bite the dust, I can let you be an informed specter."

"How did you find this place?" Samantha asked, her voice resigned. She couldn't understand how her carefully concealed hideout had been discovered so easily.

"That was easy!" Vivienne quipped, "All it took was a computer. Didn't you know I'm a master hacker?"

Samantha fumed. "I know you're a master hacker! But I want to know how you found this place. I used high-tech security and some old-school tricks to set up barriers. Ordinary people shouldn't have been able to find it."

"I'm not ordinary!" Vivienne replied with deadpan seriousness.

The room fell silent.

Samantha, overwhelmed with frustration, wanted to scream, but she knew she had to keep her cool.

Glancing at the clock on the wall, half an hour had passed, and her backup had not arrived.

Maybe he wouldn't come. Maybe there was no time to wait.

She had to act, and soon. Vivienne was too dangerous.

Now that Vivienne had laid her cards on the table, there would be no mercy. Samantha needed to save herself.

As she plotted her escape, Vivienne spoke again. "A few days ago, in M State, we encountered a woman in red. She was highly skilled, seemed to know some ancient warrior lineage techniques, and her use of silver needles was beyond compare. Do you know who she is?"

Samantha's expression tightened. It was her. She had shown up, too. What was she planning? Quickly, Samantha masked her emotions again. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

"No idea?" Vivienne was about to reply when Samantha suddenly lunged forward, aiming to throw something. However, before she could release it, her wrist was caught in a vice-like grip.

Percival twisted her wrist, snapping it effortlessly.

Thomas pried her hand open and handed the object she had been holding to Vivienne. It was a few grain-like items, and he wasn't sure what they were.

Vivienne inspected them closely, pocketing each one, then turned to Percival with a smile. "Mr. Wolf, these are quite the find."

Percival looked at her. "What are they?"

"They're miniature bombs, something

the market hasn't seen yet Do :

fooled by the intelligence\one of these

coil in this building, even more

potent Morning Glory," Vivienne

explained.

Thomas felt a surge of relief, a narrow escape from death. If Percival hadn't restrained Samantha in time, they would have been buried in the rubble.

As Samantha watched her last resort taken from her, she launched a desperate attack on Percival.

After wrenching herself free from Percival's grasp and Mics i eitale 2 make her escape tnisudhr the Window! she was met with a kick from Vivienne that sent her crashing to the floor.

A mouthful of blood spilled from her lips, a reminder she hadn't been in such a rough spot for a long time.

Picking herself up, she wiped the

blood from her mouth. With her one

good hand, she drew agayalc Ol

sytehbladeaid tc nged at Vivienne.

But her attack was intercepted by

Percival, who deftly severed the

tendons in her hand with a swift

motion.

The force emanating from Percival pinned Samantha to the corner of the room, nowhere near touching the hem of Vivienne's dress.

Another coughing fit overtook her as she clutched her chest, her gaze fixed on Vivienne.

"You've mastered the secret techniques of the ancient warrior lineages, and you've drugged me," she accused. Under normal circumstances, she would have easily parried their moves.

Vivienne's kick had seemed effortless, yet the power behind it was staggering.

And she, who could have dodged, found herself paralyzed in that critical moment.

"Only now you realize?" Vivienne said with a hint of disbelief.

Why on earth was she losing to someone with such a glaring intellectual deficit time and again?

She resolved that after today, she would take three days of seclusion to reflect on her own failings.

Samantha had not expected Vivienne to so openly admit to drugging her, especially when she was already in a position with no apparent way to turn the tables.

"With you two here, there's no way I could escape," Samantha said resignedly. Vivienne nodded in agreement as if it were the most obvious fact in the world. "Of course, I knew you couldn't escape."

"So, why drug me..." Samantha's words trailed off, a mixture of anger and confusion etched across her face.

Vivienne looked at her with a bemused expression that could only be described as watching a simpleton's antics. "After all the times you've slipped through my fingers, did you really think I wouldn't take precautions? If I let you escape again, where would that leave my reputation as a genius?"

Samantha was at a loss for words.

Rising to her feet, Vivienne approached Samantha with a commanding presence. "It seems you have no questions for me, and you're not in the mood to answer mine either. So, let's go!"

Samantha's gaze inadvertently drifted towards the window. Silence reigned outside, not a soul in sight. No one was coming to her rescue. It dawned on her that this time, she couldn't avoid her fate.

A devilish grin spread across Samantha's face. "I have to admit, you're impressive. But I haven't lived these ninety years for nothing. You aren't the only one who knows how to use poison..."

As she attempted to channel her inner energy, her expression suddenly froze. What was happening? Why couldn't she harness her inner energy?

Vivienne's lips curled into a slight smirk, watching Samantha's stunned face. "We've faced off so many times, and I actually had a bit of respect for you. You're the first one who's given me a run for my money. But how could you become so naive?"

Asinking feeling gripped Samantha. Clenching her teeth, she fixed her eyes on Vivienne. "What are you implying?"

With a casual stance, hands in her pockets, Vivienne looked down at Samantha. "Why do you think I went through all this trouble to capture you?"

Samantha glared back in silence.

Vivienne indulged her with an answer. "It's to prevent any possible escape attempts or suicide. Did you think you could use your inner energy to detonate a bomb inside you and take us down together? Sorry,

I'm too young for that. I haven't had enough quality time with my dear Mr. Wolf to check out just yet. So, when I came in, I not only drugged you but also used silver needles to seal your energy points."

Thomas was speechless. Leopold was flabbergasted. Vivienne and Percival were literally constantly flaunting their love.

Samantha's voice was laced with disbelief. "Impossible. You don't possess the skills of the ancient warrior lineages. You don't even have energy points, so how could you seal mine without my noticing?"

She could live with the fact that Vivienne had poisoned her without her noticing. After all, Vivienne's medical skills were far beyond hers, and it would be understandable. However, she refused to believe Vivienne had sealed her inner energy.

She had only lived till 90 because of her powerful inner energy. Even members of the ancient warrior lineages would not be able to seal her energy points with such little effort.

Vivienne chuckled. "I may not be much, but during those ten years at Emerald Mountain, I pilfered a secret tome from my mentor's ancient warrior lineage. It just so happened to teach about inner energy. And it was quite effective, enough to seal yours with silver needles."

The secret tome was written in the cryptic script of the ancient warrior lineage, which she couldn't understand. Fortunately, the book had illustrations. Back then, she had studied everything she could, eager to learn something fresh and unexplored.

The illustrations in that book were fascinating, like a martial arts manual. She had once asked Finnian what it was, and he dismissed it as a worthless book. Despite her coaxing and threats, he wouldn't tell her the truth.

So, she simply stole it and taught herself.

But learning inner energy required a step-by-step approach, following the manual's exact instructions. She only looked at the illustrations without knowing how to use them, which almost drove her to madness.

When she awoke, she found herself in an ice cave. She remembered clearly. That was the first time her mentor had scolded her, and for a full five hours, no less.

But she was stubborn and insisted on learning. Seeing no other choice, Finnian finally translated the book for her and personally guided her practice.

However, before encountering the ancient warrior lineages, inner energy was meaningless to her, so she never used it. Until now, capturing Samantha. "You actually possess inner energy," Samantha said in utter shock.

She could never have imagined that Vivienne had inner energy and that she hadn't sensed it at all. Those with inner energy could sense each other's presence.

For example, whether someone's inner energy was stronger than theirs was always perceptible. But she hadn't felt Vivienne's energy at all.

"Genius has no bounds," Vivienne drawled. The room fell silent once again.

At this point, Samantha realized that she no longer held control over her life or death. Her eyelids drooped, and she murmured with resignation, "I've lost."

Vivienne smiled, then turned to Thomas. "Take her away." Thomas nodded, "Yes, madam." He and Leopold, along with the others, secured Samantha, preparing to escort her away.

Suddenly, the air was charged with a powerful aura that robbed everyone of their senses in an instant. Vivienne and Percival's expressions changed simultaneously as they shouted, "Hold your breath!"

Everyone complied. Before Vivienne's words had fully settled, a figure charged towards Samantha. Vivienne and Percival immediately launched an attack.

Before they could make contact, the assailant swung a palm out, and Vivienne and Percival felt an invisible pressure bearing down on them.

It was like a colossal mountain, aiming straight for their hearts. "Percival! Madam!"

"Percival! Vivienne!"

"Vivienne!"

"Young Master!"

Thomas, Leopold, and the disciples from the Emerald Monastery cried out in unison, panic-stricken. They were sweating bullets because they were paralyzed!

Just like that, in the blink of an eye, everyone but Vivienne Percival \ d frogert i plate, unable to avoid as if their feet were encased in concrete.

They wanted to rush over to see how Vivienne and Percival were doing, but their limbs wouldn't cooperate.

Percival, hand pressed against his chest, supported Vivienne with the ' | sisi Vivien (20 airig t?" he ypitene lacing his voice.

Vivienne lifted a hand to wipe away the blood trickling from the corner of her mouth and managed a weak, "I'm fine."

But the truth was, she was far from fine.

That man had struck with just a palm strike — not even touching them — and yet her insides felt as if they'd been shattered.

He was incredibly powerful!

She looked up at their assailant to see him single-handedly lifting Samantha off the ground, his voice cold as steel. "Child's play!"

The man wore a macabre mask, something out of a Halloween

are, gbaadnngtis entire face, spies it

impossible to discern even the slightest feature.

He exuded the aura of someone not to be trifled with — a mere flick of his wrist seemed enough to dispatch them all to the Grim Reaper.

It seemed, however, he wasn't there to claim their lives, merely to take Samantha away. After he left, the others found themselves able to move again. "I'm going after him!" Thomas declared, his voice filled with a mix of rage and determination as he took off in pursuit.

They had planned for so long, and just when they had Samantha cornered with nowhere to run, someone swooped in to whisk her away.

Thomas couldn't stand it. This time, he would catch her — even if it killed him.

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Just two steps out the door, and Percival's deep voice halted him. "Come back."

Thomas froze mid-stride, protesting, "Percival, if we don't chase her down now, it'll be too late. We can't let Samantha get away again."

Percival helped Vivienne to her feet, casting a dismissive glance at Thomas. "We're withdrawing!"

"But..."

Before Thomas could finish, Percival shot him a look that silenced him immediately.

Thomas couldn't understand why! With so many of them against one, couldn't they snatch Samantha from that person's grasp?

Leopold was just as baffled, but he could sense the strength in their adversary. Maybe Percival's reluctance to pursue was because their lives were more valuable than capturing one Samantha.

The Nine Mystics Society didn't take orders from Percival. Draven, looking toward Vivienne, inquired, "Young Master, shall we withdraw?" Vivienne pulled two life-saving pills from her pocket, handing one to Percival and swallowing the other herself.

After ingesting her pill, she instructed Draven, "Everyone withdraw. Starting today, the Nine Mystics Society is on lockdown. No one leaves. Prepare our defenses."

Her words left Thomas and Leopold in a fog. Samantha had escaped, and rather than chasing her down, they were ordered to prepare the Nine Mystics Society for defense. What did this mean?

Draven, long accustomed to Vivienne's commands, understood her immediately, and with a grave expression, he confirmed, "Understood, Young Master. I'll initiate Level 2 Defense immediately."

Thomas and Leopold were utterly confused.

Level 2 Defense? What was that? Was there a fight brewing?

The apprentices from Emerald Mountain didn't question it; they trusted that Vivienne had her reasons. Draven led the Nine Mystics Society members away without another word.

Seeing this, Thomas and Leopold resignedly passed on the order for the Nightfall Assembly to retreat as well. The Emerald Mountain apprentices followed suit.

Now, only Vivienne, Percival, Thomas, and Leopold remained.

The life-saving pill was working its magic on Vivienne, rapidly healing her. This was the new and improved version she had recently developed, with the help of research from ST-1, far more effective than her original formula.

Vivienne turned to Percival with a smirk. "Mr. Wolf, we've failed again."

Percival took her hand, his stern face showing no sign of anger over Samantha's escape, and he smiled. "Indeed, we have. Let's head back and grab a bite to eat."

"Yeah. All this running around has made me starve."

With that, Vivienne and Percival headed out.

Thomas and Leopold exchanged looks before reluctantly following.

Outside the villa, Vivienne glanced back with a soft sigh, "Such a beautiful house, what a pity." Then, she casually tossed the miniature bomb she'd acquired from Samantha and shouted, "Run!" Percival, anticipating her move, grabbed her and sprinted off.

Thomas and Leopold were a step behind but still dashed away at top speed.

"Boom!"

Aloud explosion and a burst of flames erupted behind them, reducing the top-level secured villa to rubble in the blink of an eye. Elsewhere, Huxley found refuge within the Ellington Mansion.

Mara still had uses for Vivienne, who, after medicating her, allowed her to reside with the Ellingtons. And thus, Huxley also ended up at the Ellington Mansion.

Cecilia was well aware of Mara's past deeds and would have refused them entry, but with just a word from Vivienne, she held her peace.

Mara, watching her aunt close by and seeing Huxley, who had passed out upon arrival and was still bedridden, collapsed at Cecilia's feet, sobbing uncontrollably.

"Auntie, | only did those things because | was threatened. My sister-in-law has already punished me. She's medicated me, and from now on, I'll listen to whatever she says and turn over a new leaf."

Tears and snot smeared everywhere, and Cecilia felt a mix of disgust. Was her niece stupid or just plain dumb?

Seeing Cecilia silent, Mara clung to her legs. "Auntie, my mother was killed by F-Poison, and the Boyd family is no more. Everything | did was for Huxley. Please forgive me."

Cecilia, looking down at Mara, thought that if she had acted like this earlier, without causing trouble for Vivienne or indulging in crooked schemes, she wouldn't be in this mess.

She used to feel pity for Mara, orphaned so young, but now she somewhat regretted ever taking her in. "Alright, get up. From now on, work diligently for Vivienne and drop those crooked schemes," Cecilia said expressionlessly.

If not for Vivienne insisting on housing Mara and her brother, Cecilia wouldn't even bear to look at them.

Mara nodded quickly. "| understand, Auntie." After the doctor attended to Huxley and confirmed he was fine, Cecilia departed.

Mara had been a constant presence in the room, tending to her broth

with an unmixed Kagledbwotior When the naasrides -Poison kidnapped him, she had thrown herself into the lion's den without a second thought.

After Cecilia left, it wasn't long before Huxley stirred back to consciousness. Blinking at the sight of Mara, he seemed momentarily dazed before his voice, hoarse and weak, managed to utter, "Sis."

The sight of him waking sent a wave of relief through Mara, her eyes glistening with unshed tears as she pulled him into an embrace. "Huxley, oh, thank God you're awake. I was so worried about you."

A swell of emotion followed Huxley's cough. "Sis, I thought I'd never see you again." His voice quivered as if he was on the brink of tears.

If Larry and the others were there, they'd probably roll their eyes at display, but Marqaeal Sucker for Her) tit bister's vulnerability, quickly soothing him. "You're back, that's what matters. I'll always be here to protect you."

Huxley hugged her back, nodding vigorously, but in his eyes, hidden from Mara's view, there was a trace of disdain rather than joy.

At the CK stronghold where hostages were kept. The iron door swung open, and Vivienne and Percival walked in slowly.

"You've come?" Flynn rose from the ground, greeting them with a smirk that seemed oddly out of place for someone in his predicament.

Ever since Percival had brought him here, Flynn knew escape would be no easy feat. His cunning had backfired spectacularly. Vivienne and Percival stood hand in hand just outside the door, their gaze upon him icy and detached.

Seeing that neither spoke, Flynn addressed Percival in a taunting tone, "Percival, coming to see your dear uncle and not even a word to say?"

His demeanor lacked any sense of the gravity of his situation. Percival's expression was a complex mix of emotions, and he remained silent.

Vivienne, ever composed, gave Percival's hand a reassuring pat before addressing Elyanirettly? "K-poison, We've come to deliver a message. Samantha's been caught, and you— you're never getting out."

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Flynn's pupils contracted slightly at her words, and then he let out a scornful chuckle. "F-Poison? And who's Samantha? You're speaking gibberish to me."

Vivienne regarded him coolly. "You insinuated yourself into Flynn's life, became his confidant, and waited till he let his guard down. The day before the shooting, you two switched identities.

In that massacre, the real Flynn died a hero, saving lives. And you—you lived on, wearing his face.

Francis, you've schemed for eternity at the cost of everything, even delivering yourself into our hands. Did you ever calculate that this life would be your last within these walls?"

Flynn—no, Francis now—his expression cracked at her words, but he quickly masked it with laughter. His face, or rather the lifelike mask he wore, began to split, revealing a much younger visage underneath.

Vivienne couldn't help but feel a pang of surprise. Willa was well into her forties, yet the man before her, supposedly her father, looked to be in his early twenties.

"Vivienne, you're even sharper than your mother," F-Poison admitted defeat. There was no point in hiding anymore. He had lost, utterly and without a chance to turn the tables.

Yet, losing to her didn't feel like a disgrace. Vivienne was the most formidable adversary he had ever encountered.

Her mother, Karen, was formidable too, but he sensed in Vivienne that rare quality of the student surpassing the master. Given time, she would certainly eclipse her mother.

"But I'm curious, how did you unravel my secrets?" Now that his true identity was exposed, he abandoned all pretense, his youthful face twisted with a grotesque smile that was wholly unsettling.

"I've explained once to Samantha, and | don't fancy repeating myself," Vivienne replied, her gaze piercing. She leaned in slightly, a smirk playing on her lips. "But there is one thing | will tell you." Francis raised an eyebrow. "What's that?"

"While you and Samantha devoted your lives to the quest for immortality, | haven't concocted an elixir of eternal life, but | have created a life-extension pill that adds five years to a person's life. It's based on your ST-1, and it's given me a direction for my own studies into immortality."

The life-extension pill was indeed real. It was an accidental invention Vivienne had stumbled upon during her leisure time on Emerald Mountain.

Initially aiming to devise a life-saving pill, she discovered that her first attempt could prolong life—though it wasn't what she was looking for.

But she never brought the pills to market. To her, tampering with the natural order of life and death was a sacrilege, even if it was technically possible. To others, the pill might be a mere extension of life, but to her, it was defying fate.

She knew such a pill would cause chaos if released, with people killing for just one dose. That wasn't something she wished to see.

So, she made just ten pills and kept them secured forever.

Now, though, the concept of an immortality drug intrigued her—not to sell, but as a scientific challenge, one she was determined to conquer.

Francis' pupils dilated in shock. "What did you say?" She had invented the life-extension pill!

If he had known, all the elaborate schemes of RST would have been unnecessary. Capturing Vivienne could have given him everything he desired.

Vivienne glanced at him dismissively. " | don't waste words on the hard of hearing."

With that, she took Percival's hand and strode towards the exit, pausing only to deliver a parting shot. "Francis, remember to please your masters in your next life as a lesser creature, to atone for your sins in this one. Otherwise, you'll be trapped in a cycle of rebirth as an animal forever."

Leaving those words hanging in the air, she and Percival stepped out. From her backpack, she pulled a compact explosive and tossed it behind her.

Boom!

The explosion echoed through the valley as Vivienne and Percival drove away from the inferno.

On the road, Percival was silent, his face etched with dark thoughts.

Knowing Percival was in a bad mood, Vivienne turned to him, held his hand, and said, "Mr. Wolf, let's go fetch Uncle Flynn." Flynn had been Percival's uncle, the one person in the Ellington family he trusted unconditionally.

To think that for years, it had been another man wearing his uncle's face. Before uncovering Francis' identity, he had despised Flynn for his perceived betrayal and the threat he posed to their legacy.

But learning the truth—that it wasn't his uncle who betrayed him, but Francis—filled him with remorse for not trusting his uncle more.

Vivienne saw the burden weighing on Percival and knew how unsettled he must feel. Now that Francis was out of the picture, Percival was undoubtedly conflicted.

He had wanted Francis to suffer a torment that gnawed to the bone until his dying breath.

But they had to act fast. With Samantha still at large, they couldn't afford to let her get away. If Francis lived, they would find a way to rescue him.

And they didn't have the luxury of keeping constant watch themselves.

It wasn't a matter of distrust in their team—it was just that Francis, Samantha, and the shadowy figure behind her were too powerful. Their people simply couldn't stop them.

So, killing Francis on the spot was the best choice.

"Thank you, Vivienne!" A wave of warmth coursed through Percival's chest.

To know him best was, undoubtedly, Vivienne.

A thousand words could not express his gratitude, leaving him with only one sincere "thank you."

Vivienne chuckled. "Don't mention it. If you thank me, it'll be like you don't love me!"

At her words, Percival hit the brakes hard, his hand snaking around her neck as he leaned in for a deep, lingering kiss.

His kiss was gentle and prolonged, and it was a while before he lifted his head to gaze intently at Vivienne. "Vivienne, I love you! Only you!"

A soft blush colored Vivienne's fair cheeks, and with a slightly embarrassed giggle she teased, "How could you give me a heads-up before you go for a kiss? So I can brace myself?"

It seemed every time before she had her fill, he broke away too soon. She always wanted more!

Percival let out a laugh, his earlier gloom about Francis scattering away instantly. His desire for her kiss and that long moment, nibbled on her lip and asked, "Vivienne, is that enough?"

"Enough, it's enough!" Vivienne stammered!

That kiss was downright life-threatening! And the thought of tackling her Mr. Wolf was tempting! But here they were, in the middle of a bustling street...

She reasoned she just couldn't. Not here. Not now.

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Percival stroked her hair with an indulgent smile, his voice a gentle murmur, "I'll take you to the hospital first. Got some errands to run, and then you're coming to stay at my place tonight."

His "place" was his sprawling private estate.

Vivienne blinked, teasingly suggesting, "Should I clean up and wait for your royal favor?"

She was already daydreaming about her Mr. Wolf seducing her in nothing but his birthday suit. So tempting!

Percival was momentarily speechless. Since when had his Vivienne become so... frisky? And what was that at the corner of her mouth?

Drool? What thoughts were swirling in that little head of hers?

"Ahem!" Percival snapped back to reality, his tone a mixture of amusement and resignation. "Aren't you supposed to be holding a memorial service?"

Vivienne paused, then said, "Oh, right!" She had planned a service to send Francis off. To the animal realm, so to speak.

She initially wanted to hold it at Emerald Mountain, but it was too far, and with her mother still unconscious, she couldn't leave. So, she asked Mr. Wolf to find a place for her ceremony to bid Francis farewell.

She hadn't expected Mr. Wolf to pick his villa. She had thought... well, that Mr. Wolf had other intentions. How embarrassing!

Percival, with a blend of exasperation and affection, assured her, "Once I'm done, I'll pick up what you need. It'll probably take all day, so I'll have Thomas pick you up!"

Vivienne had no words.

Seeing her like this, Percival couldn't help but chuckle. He leaned in close and whispered in her ear, "Don't worry, Vivienne, that day will come eventually."

Vivienne was left speechless—his words making her seem all too eager.

At the Linklater Mansion.

The entire Linklater family sat together in the living room. Yorick had only recently regained consciousness and was still weak, but his eyes shone with excitement. The night had fallen, yet no one suggested going to bed.

Suddenly, the sound of car horns echoed from outside, and Yorick, agitated, stood up, asking, "Is he back? Has he returned?" Dracon quickly steadied his father, peering out the window with a gloomy look. "Yes, my big brother is back." Why did he have to come back?

His big brother was now a veritable legend in Veridia, while he was the mocked and scorned black sheep of the Linklater family. Just as he was trying to shed that label, his illustrious brother had to return.

With his brother back, would he ever escape the ridicule?

It was bad enough when Hector returned—although his achievements didn't quite measure up to their eldest brother's. But now, with both the renowned brothers home, what place did he, the so-called failure, have in the Linklater family?

The thought was suffocating! Outside, a line of sleek black cars pulled up in the driveway, their headlights piercing the dark, a display of sheer authority. The patriarch, still frail, shuffled toward the door with Hector's support as the rest of the family followed.

As they stepped outside, the man they had been anticipating descended from his vehicle—a figure in a sharp black trench coat, his presence commanding.

Upon seeing his family, the formidable air around him softened, but the palpable tension didn't completely dissipate.

He glanced back and murmured something to the person beside him, who promptly drove the car away and then faced the approaching duo.

Arthur Linklater greeted with a simple, "Dad." Then, kneeling before the old man, he continued, "Dad, I haven't been here to fulfill my duties as a son, and for that, I'm sorry."

Throughout the years, Arthur had been consumed by battles and campaigns, neglecting his family affairs. As the eldest, he bore the weight of his absence and the guilt of not guiding his siblings.

Emotion crept into his tone, revealing his deep-seated remorse. At those words, Yorick embraced his son tightly. "It's good to have you back, son. That's all that matters."

For years, Yorick's greatest wish was for Arthur to return home safely. Now, with his son before him, safe and sound, tears welled in his eyes.

After a brief catch-up, Arthur finally noticed Dracon standing quietly to the side. He asked pointedly, "What? Not happy to see me?"

Dracon quickly put on a smile, "Arthur, of course, I'm happy. I didn't want to interrupt your chat with Dad."

Arthur's hawk-like gaze lingered on him for a moment before shifting to Hector.

Chapter 696

Arthur glanced at Dracon, breaking the silence, "How have you been holding up these past few years?" Yorick scoffed dismissively. "How do you think? The guy's been loafing around, never lifting a finger to do anything worthwhile." Yorick couldn't help but compare him to his other sons, each carving out their own unique achievements in their chosen fields.

Dracon, meanwhile, remained at home, not even managing to take proper care of the family estate, the Linklater Mansion. His schemes were as transparent as they were numerous.

Just the other week, when Yorick had been poisoned, the investigation had been halted midway. The lack of inquiry didn't mean Dracon was innocent.

But Yorick had stopped digging to protect Dracon. He knew that if the truth of the poisoning reached Arthur, with his fiery temper, Dracon's days would be numbered.

Yorick, a man of integrity, would have made the same decision as Arthur in the past. But years had passed, Arthur and Hector had been away, and only Dracon had stayed by his side. Despite Dracon's failings, he had taken decent care of him.

As he grew old, Yorick longed for family harmony over the anguish of a father burying his son. And so, he had covered for Dracon.

But...

Yorick's eyes involuntarily drifted to Arthur.

Arthur's return could only mean he was here for this very reason. If he decided to investigate, no cover-up would suffice. The thought alone gave Yorick a headache.

Dracon had wanted to speak up, but hearing such a harsh critique from his father, he sulked into silence.

Arthur's eagle-eyed gaze settled on Dracon for a few seconds before he spoke, "Dad, we all have our paths to maturity. Wasn't | the same clueless kid once upon a time?"

Yorick was taken aback. Arthur had never been one to defend Dracon. He was doing good if he didn't scold him—yet today, he was actually speaking for Dracon?

Could it be he already knew? Impossible!

Arthur was a soldier, far away on the battlefields where news traveled slowly. Even if Arthur had wanted to investigate something, it would take days, and there was no guarantee he would find anything.

Yorick had kept it under wraps from the start. Even if Arthur wanted to pry, it would take time.

Arthur must be fishing for information!

Realizing this, Yorick shot Dracon a look, signaling him to keep his mouth shut.

But before Yorick could elaborate, Arthur spoke again, "Dracon, don't take Dad's words to heart."

Dracon's eyes widened in disbelief. Was this really his big brother speaking? Was he possessed or something?

In the midst of his silence, Arthur's gaze briefly skimmed over him. "What's wrong? You think I'm not worthy of speaking to you?"

Startled, Dracon quickly retorted, "No, no, Arthur, you got it all wrong. I'm just not used to you being so... nice. And I didn't take Dad's words to heart, I promise."

Arthur's lips curled into a rare smile. "Back in the day, the battlefield hardened me. Now that I'm home for good, I'll shed some of that roughness."

Dracon gasped. "You're staying for good? You're leaving the battlefield?"

Arthur not leaving? What would become of his own chances to shine?

Both Yorick and Hector were equally stunned.

Yorick spoke first. "Is this your choice or an order from the top?"

He knew Arthur well—war was his home. Unless it was a direct order, Arthur would never leave the battlefield.

Hector, still reeling from shock, managed a smile. "Arthur coming home is good news. I've been thinking of settling down, too. It's about time we brothers spent some quality time together here in Rivenwood."

"Indeed," Arthur affirmed, then addressed Yorick, "It's my decision, and it's been approved." The joy Yorick had felt at Arthur's return was now tinged with an inexplicable panic. It felt like Arthur's return would stir trouble in the Linklater family—a prospect far from Yorick's wishes.

Suddenly, Yorick erupted in a coughing fit. Arthur patted his back, asking casually as if unaware of anything. "Dad, what's wrong?"

No one had informed Arthur of Yorick's poisoning, so he played the part of the uninformed.

Yorick was about to dismiss it when Dracon burst out, "It's all because of Percival and that Vivienne. They nearly killed Dad."

Chapter 697

At the Grimshaw family's mansion. Ever since Samantha was whisked away by that enigmatic man, she had plunged into unconsciousness. It wasn't until nightfall that she began to stir, finally coming to.

Waking up, she was immediately hit by an all-over ache, as if she had been dismantled and poorly reassembled. Luckily, the damaged pathways within her had been expertly reconnected.

As she mulled over this, the door creaked open, and a man strolled in.

Upon seeing him, Samantha flashed a smile, sultry as a siren's call. She rose to her feet and sidled up to him, her voice a soft drip of honey. "I knew you'd come for me."

The man cast her a nonchalant glance, his voice sharp as ice. "Foolish!"

"I was careless this time. I didn't expect Vivienne to be so formidable. After all this time in hiding, she managed to find me." Samantha's voice was tinged with frustration.

That villa had cost her a pretty penny, fortified with barriers so sophisticated that even a master hacker might fail to pinpoint her sanctuary.

But she had overlooked one thing: Vivienne was no ordinary hacker. She was the Shadow Wolf! A legend in the hacking world.

And her mother, Karen, was even more skilled than she.

The duo was not only evil but seemed to be at cosmic odds with Samantha herself.

The man watched her, expressionless, silent as stone.

Sensing his displeasure, Samantha purred, "With your skills, they won't find you."

A flicker of something passed through the man's eyes. He spoke, his voice deep and resonant, "When will you have what I want ready?"

"It will take time!" His face darkened immediately.

Samantha quickly explained, "I've just been rescued by you. Vivienne and Percival are scouring the city for me. I can't expose myself yet. Arrange a place for me to stay, and once things cool down, I'll set up a new lab."

He continued to regard her in cold silence.

"Rest assured, I've found the research direction. I'm planning an upgraded version of ST-1 with a few more potent ingredients. It shouldn't be a problem."

In truth, she had no such direction. But she had to say it. This man was nothing like Francis, so easy to deal with. She loved Francis, but not that passionately. And this man...

Well, he was the wild desire that Francis couldn't satisfy. Also, he was a talisman she sought for herself and Francis.

Immortality was her obsession, not Francis'. Francis loved her and wanted to be immortal with her. But for her, immortality was about forever ensnaring men with her beauty.

Apart from Francis and the man before her, there were many others. Some had since entered their graves. Others were mere lads of twenty.

She had sampled every flavor of man but never bore a child to any, including Francis. The man's demeanor softened slightly. He spoke coolly, "Make sure it's so. I have no use for worthless women."

Samantha slithered closer, her alabaster fingers tracing lightly along his jawline, her voice a seductive spell, "Do you find me... useless?"

He looked down at Samantha, who was clad in the silk lace nightgown he had chosen for her. The neckline plunged daringly, hinting at the treasures beneath.

Her serpentine grace twisted upon him, and at last, he reacted. He gripped Samantha's head, his kiss fierce. She winced, not a touch of Francis' gentleness.

ut... she liked it. Suddenly, he tossed her back onto the bed, his body following in a swift motion. A tempest raged within the room. Three hours later, it subsided.

The man got up, dressing unhurriedly, gazing down at Samantha. He caressed her face. "This face, this body, still so enticing, and your skills... they improve, little temptress, but don't seduce me."

Though Samantha was much older, in his presence, she seemed a mere girl. Samantha smiled. "As long as you're pleased. In time, you'll savor this every day."

Immortality wasn't just about her face; her body had to defy age as well. Thankfully, though ST-1's effects on the face were short-lived, it maintained her body superbly.

At ninety, she appeared no more than thirty. Yet, she was not content. She yearned to be forever eighteen.

The man pinched her cheek. "Your new place is arranged. Stay put, and don't show your face at the Grimshaw family, or you'll know the consequences."

"Understood," Samantha nodded, "I only want you." Without another word, he turned and left.

Samantha watched his retreat, lips curling. Such a carnivore, devouring the 'meal' and then forgetting it.

At Rivenwood Vivienne visited Karen, who still hadn't awakened. Willa was there, tirelessly tending to her every need.

After examining Karen, Vivienne's brows knitted tightly together.

Chapter 698

Percival glanced up and found himself staring into Vivienne's eyes, filled with desire. He coughed awkwardly. "Till just go get changed." He rarely visited this villa, and even when he did, he preferred to shower in the master bedroom upstairs.

Today, he had come home late after wrapping up some work and figured that Vivienne would be arriving soon, so he decided to freshen up downstairs.

He never expected to bump into Vivienne like this. Her gaze seemed to devour him. The feeling was mutual.

Yet, they weren't married yet, and Percival didn't want to take things too far before their wedding day. He believed that was the greatest respect he could show Vivienne.

Just as Percival was about to change, Vivienne pounced, wrapping her legs around his waist, her voice dripping with seduction. "Mr. Wolf, can't wait for me to take you? Denial isn't your strong suit!"

Percival was speechless, denying it inwardly, "That's not true, not at all."

Vivienne eyed his thin, enticing lips, swallowing hard.

What should she do? She was dying for a taste! But it seemed Mr. Wolf wasn't too keen on the idea. Would it be so wrong to steal a kiss?

Percival, feeling her gaze, said helplessly, "Vivienne, you're drooling!"

"You're too tempting!" Vivienne admitted, aware of her own desire.

It was pathetic, really. She had no defense against Mr. Wolf's irresistible charm.

Percival, holding Vivienne, said tenderly, "Darling, come down. We've got business to attend to." Vivienne intended to comply, but her body had other plans.

Just the sight of Mr. Wolf's lips made her want to taste them.

And with that thought, she acted, biting down on Percival's lip, her voice sultry. "Business can wait." Casting spells for Francis was hardly as pressing as tangling in the sheets with Mr. Wolf.

“Vivienne...” Percival gasped softly, struggling to maintain control as her teasing kiss pulled him under. From the standing position to the sofa, then upstairs, the bathroom, and finally the bed.

What followed was best left unsaid.

Roughly two hours later, Vivienne lay spent in Percival’s arms.

She hadn’t expected this workout to be more draining than her regular fitness routine.

Only two hours, and she was completely immobile.

Percival cradled her, guilt written all over his face. “I’m sorry, Vivienne!”

It was self-reproach, really. He should have been more restrained, and Vivienne would not be this exhausted. Vivienne turned, looping her arms around his neck, a smile on her lips. “Sorry for what? Not performing well?” Percival was at a loss.

When did Vivienne become so unrestrained?

Vivienne rolled on top of him, biting his lip, whispering, “Don’t worry, Mr. Wolf. I’ll take responsibility.”

The pain of the first time was overshadowed by the pleasure that followed.

Most importantly, from now on, there would be no stopping her from devouring Mr. Wolf completely. Unable to hold back any longer, Percival flipped them over, his voice hoarse. “You siren!”

Vivienne giggled. “I am a siren indeed, Mr. Wolf. Be careful you don’t lose your soul to me!”

“To lose my life to you would be bliss,” Percival murmured before their lips met again.

Another indescribable scene unfolded.

Finally, at ten o'clock in the evening, their stormy escapade ended.

Vivienne and Percival got dressed and began their ritual.

Holding a seance was a skill Vivienne had honed at the Emerald Monastery, which also offered such services. However, Finnian had no desire to expand the monastery's fame, so they seldom performed these rituals.

For Vivienne, it was her first time conducting one since joining the monastery, as she had focused mainly on her medical practice.

For the sake of their plan, Francis had to die. But—death came too easily to him. So, she needed to ensure his afterlife would be troubled. Let him be reborn in the realm of beasts in his next life.

Although Vivienne seldom conducted rituals for others, her training was ingrained, and she performed with ease. In just about an hour, she was done.

Once the villa was cleared of talismans, Vivienne collapsed onto the sofa in Percival's embrace. "Mr. Wolf, I'm starving!" She rarely ate at night, except for a slice of strawberry cheesecake, but today's exertions had left her famished. Percival stroked her hair. "What do you fancy? I'll have something delivered."

Vivienne pondered a moment, then said, "I crave your homemade pasta."

The first meal Mr. Wolf had ever made for her was pasta.

After all this time, she still believed it was the most delicious pasta in the world.

Percival kissed her forehead affectionately. "Alright, I happened to pick up some fresh ingredients today."

He didn't usually keep much food here, but knowing Vivienne was staying over, he had bought ingredients for the next morning's breakfast.

Chapter 699

The next day, Vivienne woke to find Percival already gone from her side.

After freshening up, she wandered into the kitchen to find Percival busy at work. Clad in an apron, he moved with a deliberate grace, preparing breakfast with the morning light casting a different kind of glow upon him.

Watching him, Vivienne felt a profound sense of peace.

Percival looked up to see her standing in the doorway. He walked over and playfully tapped her nose. "Just a bit longer. Breakfast is almost ready."

She smiled softly. "Okay."

Soon, the meal was ready. Considering Vivienne had overexerted herself the previous day, Percival had simmered a chicken soup. The chicken, bought fresh that morning by Thomas, was accompanied by two side dishes and a couple of eggs. Neither of them had a big appetite; the portions were just right for two.

After eating, Percival handed Vivienne a napkin and wiped his mouth with another. He looked at her seriously. "Vivienne, I plan to start searching for your biological father."

Vivienne's fingers paused, and her eyes narrowed slightly. After a moment, she asked, "Why?"

The concept of finding her father wasn't new to her, but she had almost no information about him. Her mother had always avoided the truth, and now that she was comatose, Vivienne had even less hope of finding him. She had almost given up the idea; the word "father" was foreign to her.

Although Dorian Hawthorn had cherished her as his own daughter, it wasn't the same as having a biological father. For Vivienne, it was enough that her mother was alive.

In truth, there was a time when Vivienne resented her father. She couldn't understand how a man could leave a woman pregnant and not show his face for over twenty years. Although Karen had told her that her father was an incredible man, she felt he failed in his duties, never providing her with any fatherly love.

"Master said, for us to marry, your father must be present," Percival took her hand earnestly. "The license was a spur of the moment, but for the wedding, I want your father there." Vivienne remained silent.

"Vivienne, initially I thought we could postpone the wedding date to discuss with both families, but after yesterday... I don't want to wait. I want to organize our wedding as soon as possible."

After Percival and Vivienne got the marriage license, their two families discussed the date of the wedding. However, since Karen had yet to wake, they agreed to hold the wedding two years later.

The Ellingtons had hoped for an earlier wedding, not considering it fair to Vivienne until the ceremony was held, despite the marriage license. The Perez family, while also eager for the wedding, were more concerned about Karen's condition.

Both Karen and Vivienne had to go through a lot of hardships to finally reunite with each other after so many years. If Karen woke up one day to find she had missed Vivienne's wedding, she would certainly be in deep self-blame.

Thus, they decided to wait for Karen for two years. If she awoke within that time, the wedding would be held immediately. If not, they wouldn't wait any longer. They did not want to delay Vivienne's wedding indefinitely.

As for finding Vivienne's father, it was Percival's strict adherence to Karen's words: her father must attend her wedding. But with scant information available, all he could do was try his best, knowing only Karen had the answers.

"Alright."

After breakfast, Vivienne and Percival parted ways. She headed to Frostfire Intelligence Agency's Rivenwood outpost to seek clues for her father, entrusting them with the search. Percival went to Vanguard Agency to deal with the aftermath of Samantha's escape and Francis' death, as well as traitors within the agency. However, he wasn't planning to confront them himself.

That day, he carried an appointment letter naming Thomas as the new Deputy Director of the Rivenwood Vanguard Agency. Upon delivering the letter to Vance's office, he was about to leave when Vance stopped him. "Did you know a big shot is visiting Vanguard Agency today?"

Percival paused, "Who?"

He wasn't aware of this development, having been focused on F-Poison. But now that things were settling down, he could spare some time for the agency.

"That one," Vance gestured upwards.

Percival's usually impassive eyes brightened. "You mean, the War God?"

In Veridia, there was a legend named Arthur, known as the War God, revered by the people.

Vance nodded. "This morning, he called personally, instructing everyone at Vanguard Agency to stay put and not to leave." Vance glanced at Percival, clicking his tongue. "Seems like the calm before the storm."

Percival chuckled. "Vanguard Agency has been at ease for too long; a good storm might just clean it up."

Vance shot him a glare. "Don't beat around the bush. | admit I'm not Mr. Clean, but when it comes to the Vanguard Agency, I'm all in, heart and soul."

Percival arched an eyebrow, silent.

He was actually itching to meet his hero. But today wasn't the day.

With that thought, Percival stood up and said, "I gotta jet."

"You're not the least bit curious about what brings the War egeree 08 ti er MANE cain fhe p but probe, n ie Percival's nonchalant demeanor.

Percival smirked. "Whatever the War God's cooking up, he's got hi om reasons. oy ystpla all, and that's that 18 ot like he's gonna bring the whole Vanguard Agency down."

Seeing Vance unmoved, he added, "Anyway, I'll announce Thomas' promotion later." With a grunt of acknowledgment, Percival turned on his heel and headed out.

No sooner had he stepped out of Vance's office than a squad of fully-armed comprandessburst i Guns atithteady and with practiced precision, they corralled everyone at the Vanguard Agency. "Nobody moves."

Then, a figure in combat gear strode in— Arthur. Each step he took seemed to weigh on everyone's chest, his aura undeniably regal.

The warriors of the Vanguard Agency had faced countless battles, yet in Arthur's presence, they felt as insignificant as kittens. Most of the Agency had never met Arthur. Even Vance and Micah had only caught glimpses of his silhouette from a distance.

Suddenly, a stern-faced man at Arthur's side commanded, "Cease all activities and hand over all communication devices for inspection."

At this command, the Vanguard Agency's members all froze.

They were used to being the ones conducting the inspections, so how had the tables turned so suddenly?

Chapter 700

The Vanguard Agency agents were stunned for a moment, but then all hell broke loose.

"What's the meaning of this? An inspection? What crime have we committed?"

"Who are these guys? Don't they know what Vanguard Agency stands for?"

"Look at their combat gear, never seen anything like it. Can someone tell me what's going on here?"

Vance had never seen Arthur's face up close, but just from his aura alone, he guessed that this had to be the legendary War God of Veridia.

But what Vance couldn't figure out was what the War God was up to with this stunt.

After a brief silence, Vance stepped forward and saluted Arthur. "War God!"

Arthur's eyes swept over him, his voice deep and foreboding. "You're the director of Rivenwood precinct, Vance?" His speech was deliberate, yet Vance felt an unprecedented sense of oppression.

Unconsciously, Vance's back was drenched with sweat. He suppressed the feeling of being crushed internally and responded, "Yes, that's me."

Arthur was the War God, a title bestowed upon him by the top brass of Veridia. He was beholden to no agency, only taking orders from the supreme leader. In any department within Veridia, the presence of the War God demanded a salute and the address of 'War God.'

"Do you think you've been diligent in your role as the director?" Arthur's voice was calm, yet his aura of authority was undiminished, perhaps even more oppressive than before.

Vance felt the invisible weight nearly suffocating him, but after a short while, he managed to look up and say with all seriousness, "I believe I have been diligent!"

"Diligent?" Arthur snorted, "Out of the thirty non-combat personnel at Vanguard Agency, fifteen have been using their power for personal gain. And you say you're diligent?"

He took a step forward, stopping just a step away from Vance. His eagle-like gaze stared intently at Vance as if trying to see right through him.

Vance's heart skipped a beat, and he retorted, "How could that be? I may not know about others, but under my watch here in Rivenwood, my team is beyond reproach."

Vance was aware there were problems within Vanguard Agency; his own mentor, Vesper, had been an undercover operative for GTO.

But after Vesper was exposed, Vance had thoroughly vetted everyone at Vanguard Agency from top to bottom. Their backgrounds were clean.

Why would the War God say such a thing?

Arthur gave him a cold look, then turned to stand at the center of Vanguard Agency, his gaze sweeping over everyone like a sovereign overseeing his subjects. "My name is Arthur Linklater. As of today, I'm taking full control of Vanguard Agency headquarters. Every member of the agency, up to the directors of the agency and down to the janitors, will be under investigation. Until everything is cleared up, no one is to leave without authorization."

With that, Arthur looked towards Vance and Micah. "You two will start."

Two operatives immediately surrounded Vance, their faces stern. "Please come with us." Vance and Micah's expressions turned sour.

Vance looked at Arthur, "What's the meaning of this?"

"Have you gotten too cozy in your position to hear properly?" Arthur replied coolly. Vance was seething.

This guy's way of speaking was infuriating!

Who else spoke in a way that just got under his skin like that?

Right! Vivienne!

She had the same effect!

She was maddening with her words!

After a long silence from Percival, he finally spoke up, "Vance, Micah, just comply with the investigation." Vance was about to lash out, but when he heard Percival, he paused.

Arthur, having spent years on the battlefield, rarely returning home, caused such a stir upon his arrival. Likely, this was the will of the higher-ups.

As Veridia's War God, Arthur technically had no jurisdiction over Vanguard Agency, yet here he was, taking charge with an iron fist, not giving anyone a moment to breathe. It meant that the Vanguard Agency was about to face a serious shake-up.

Who would be affected by the shake-up would depend on the government's will. Once Vance understood this, he exchanged a look with Micah and said, "We will comply with the investigation." Subsequently, they followed the operatives out.

The rest of the Vanguard Agency staff were dumbstruck as they watched them leave, not even given a chance to react before the operatives swiftly took control and escorted them away.

Within ten minutes, the bustling Vanguard Agency was left with only Percival and Arthur.

Arthur approached Percival, his piercing gaze sizing him up. "So you're the kid from the Ellington family?" Was this the young man his father esteemed, the rare talent he praised?

Aside from being slightly handsome, there didn't seem to be anything outstanding about him!

By all accounts, Percival was his father's protégé, so Arthur's disposition towards him should have been more favorable. But for some reason, he just couldn't stand the sight of the kid.

Where exactly the irritation stemmed from, he couldn't quite put his finger on. Percival responded with respect in his tone, "Yes, I'm Percival." Arthur, hands in his pockets, continued to stare him down. "I hear you tried to poison my father a while back?"

He had mostly investigated the matter and confirmed Percival's innocence. Yet, there was something inside him, a stubborn streak, that wanted to trip Percival up.

Wait a minute.

What was this all about?

He, the esteemed War God of Veridia, was hassling a junior without cause?

It made no sense!

"Not true!" Percival replied calmly and steadily.

"Oh?" Seeing Percival neither grovel nor cower, Arthur's estimation of him rose a notch.

His aura, honed in the company of the dead, could make even Yorick shudder, yet Percival stood unflinching from start to finish.

Arthur's interest in Percival was piqued, and with a raised eyebrow, he inquired, "If you're not the one who poisoned him, you're still tangled up in this mess. Why not spill the beans on who did?"

With a slight curve of his lips, Percival replied, "My wife always tells me that if you want to live long, keep your nose out of other people's business. Sorry, I don't have any insights!"

Arthur's stern face cracked into a smile. "I wouldn't have pegged you for a man who fears his better half." Still as respectful as ever, Percival admitted, "Yes, she's strict about those things."

Arthur didn't pursue the conversation further. Instead, he walked around the Vanguard Agency and then spoke up with a deep voice, "I've looked into you and your lady."

Percival's eyes narrowed for a moment, but he quickly composed himself, waiting for Arthur to continue.

"Both of you are brilliant. You played a crucial role in the operation to capture GTO's assy Efibisolr; even iientiohahyle ting Samantha slip away to draw out her puppeteer. You've got brains, alright..."

Suddenly, his tone shifted. "But overconfidence is a shortcut to the grave." Percival's brows knitted slightly as he looked up at Arthur.

"Do you think by letting Samantha go, to reveal the man behind the curtain, that GTO's res Fshyan the atnirs lfewauld jase stop?" Arthur pulled up a chair and sat opposite Percival, legs crossed, his face expressionless as he stared at him.

Percival's expression changed abruptly; his initial respect for Arthur was gone, replaced by an aura of danger. "What are you driving at?"

The matter of the elixir of life was something they hadn't yet reported to the authorities.

It was a matter of great importance. He and Vivienne planned to conduct experiments and verify the f

of creatin sheeivindPite before dedidir O report it. After all, the implications were enormous. If word got out, countless people would vie for the elixir, even resorting to desperate measures to obtain it.

Aside from Francis, and the shadowy figure behind him, only he and Vivienne were in the know. How had Arthur come by this information?