

Million-Dollar 701

Chapter 701

Percival stared at Arthur with an intensity that seemed to cut right through him as if trying to read his soul. But Arthur was an enigma, a book whose pages refused to be turned. Despite Percival's knack for sizing people up, Arthur, the revered War God of Veridia, remained an untold story to him.

With just a side glance, Arthur seemed to catch onto Percival's musings and let out a derisive chuckle. "You're wondering why I know about the elixir of life? Why I brought it up in front of you? Whether I'm a traitor?"

Percival was speechless, thinking, "Can you read minds or what?" Wait a second. Why did his tone sound so familiar?

Arthur stood up, his gaze icy as he gave Percival a once-over. "Kid, you've got a lot to learn. Some things aren't as simple as they appear on the surface!"

With that, Arthur turned on his heel and strode away.

Pausing at the doorway, he seemed to remember something and looked back at Percival. "The Vanguard Agency? It's history as of today!"

Without another word, Arthur left.

Percival watched Arthur's retreating figure, his eyes shadowed with thought.

After a moment, he looked up at the Vanguard Agency, then walked away.

Meanwhile, Vivienne had made her way to the Frostfire Intelligence Agency, insisting that Matthew focus on finding her father.

After Matthew briefed her on recent missions, Vivienne left. With Percival tied up in work, she suddenly realized she had nowhere in particular to go.

Then it struck her — she hadn't taken the Thaddeus and Isolde out for fun in ages. With a free day ahead, she decided to treat the kids to a day out.

Her place was just a stone's throw from the Hawthorns, so she headed over to pick up Thaddeus. As Vivienne arrived, only Cordelia was home.

Upon seeing Vivienne, Cordelia's face lit up with surprise, quickly followed by a warm smile. "Vivienne! What a pleasant surprise!"

Ever since Dorian launched his boutique fragrance business, he had been swamped. Vivienne, too, had her plate full, and visits to the Hawthorns' had been scarce.

Dorian had tried inviting Vivienne over for a family dinner a few times, but she was always tied up. Cordelia had been planning to visit Karen in the hospital and was taken aback to see Vivienne turn up first.

With a bright smile, Cordelia welcomed Vivienne in. "Come in, dear. You really should give us a heads-up next time so I can whip up something nice. We've got nothing in the kitchen right now. Tell you what, I'll call your dad and have him come home for lunch. We can all go out for a meal!"

Since the company took off, not only Dorian but also Cordelia had been busy helping out. With Thaddeus now in boarding school during the week, the house was quiet except on weekends.

After working late the previous night, Cordelia hadn't yet had the chance to shop for groceries. Thus, there was literally nothing in the kitchen.

Vivienne chuckled, "No need, Cordelia. I was thinking of taking Thaddeus out for a bit of fun today."

Ever since Vivienne reconciled with Karen, she had taken to calling Dorian and Cordelia by their first names — not out of distance, but for clarity's sake. It avoided confusion during family gatherings when she was calling out for 'mom' or 'dad.'

"We can have fun any day. Today, we eat together. It's been too long since you've been home," Cordelia insisted firmly.

To Cordelia, Vivienne was as dear as a biological daughter, and she longed to treat her to a good meal, knowing how busy she was. After all, she knew that Vivienne rarely had time to eat a proper meal when she was busy. More importantly, she had heard that Karen did not know how to cook. Thus, Cordelia was worried that even if Karen were not unconscious right now, she probably would not be able to take good care of Vivienne.

Vivienne couldn't shake her off and suggested, "How about I take Thaddeus out now, and we have a home-cooked meal this afternoon? Cordelia, I've been craving your homemade spaghetti!"

Cordelia was quick to reply, "Then I'll head to the supermarket right now and get what we need for your favorite pasta."

Concern etched on her face, Cordelia continued, "Look at you, you've lost weight! How's Percival been looking after you? He promised us he'd take good care of you!"

Cordelia said indignantly, "Next time I see him, I'll have to ask what on earth he's been so busy with that he can't even make sure you eat properly."

Vivienne rubbed her temples, slightly overwhelmed by Cordelia's care. "Cordelia, I haven't lost weight, I've gained," Vivienne said earnestly, "Three pounds!" Cordelia looked skeptical. "Impossible, you look thinner to me!"

Vivienne stepped onto the scale, and indeed, she was three pounds heavier, but Cordelia was still not satisfied. "Only three pounds? That's not looking after you properly. You should be gaining at least ten!"

Vivienne was at a loss for words.

Just then, Thaddeus emerged from his room, thirsty, and stopped in his tracks at the sight of Vivienne. His face lit up with joy as he exclaimed, "Sis! I've missed you so much!"

He had been on the phone with Isolde, and due to the noise on the other end and the excellent soundproofing of the house, he hadn't heard Vivienne come in.

Thaddeus hugged Vivienne tightly, rubbing his cheek against hers. "Why haven't you come to see me in so long? I've missed playing with you."

Thaddeus had grown more outgoing, likely from spending time with Isolde. The once introverted boy was now full of life and eager for Vivienne's company.

Isolde was a sweetheart, a classmate of Thaddeus at the local school. They were practically inseparable! every weekend together. Over time, the rough patches Thaddeus had experienced seemed to fade from his memory.

Vivienne gave his head a gentle tousle and whispered, "Go get changed. I'm taking you out for some fun!" "Really?" Thaddeus's eyes widened with excitement. "You mean it, Sis? You're really gonna take me out?" "Absolutely, now scoot!"

"Yippee! I'm gonna have a blast, finally hanging out with my sister!" Brimming with exhilaration, Thaddeus dashed into his room and quickly slipped into his casual gear.

Cordelia watched her son's antics with a mix of amusement and resignation. Even with a hectic work schedule, she always made time for Thaddeus on the weekends.

Now that they were more comfortable financially, she had point of taking him to the park. They had been to all the local attractions—theme parks, zoos, you name it, they had done it all around Rivenwood.

But it seemed that no matter how much fun they had, it never quite lit him up the way Vivienne's presence did.

Today, Thaddeus was decked out in a cool casual outfit, topped with a sleek black cap and a small backpack slung over his shoulder, looking every bit the dapper young man.

He approached Vivienne and took her hand confidently. "Sis, can we invite Isolde along? And maybe some of our classmates?"

He paused, then added, "There's this girl, Amelia Littleton. She's had it pretty rough. Her dad Rees is a dh mageul wen & ard. Just a while back, her mom broke a customer's stuff and had to pay a ton of money. She worked herself to the bone to make up for it, even fainting from overwork..."

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Thaddeus's little face was scrunched up tight, and he let out a faint sigh.

Seeing this, Cordelia turned to Vivienne and said, "I'm familiar with the situation. Amelia's mother Kaitlyn was a lady from the once-renowned Littleton family of Rivenwood. But after the Littleton family went bankrupt and couldn't settle their debts, her parents both jumped from the roof of their home. Later on, she married a schoolteacher, and they had a decent middle-class life, with kind in-laws."

Cordelia paused, also sighing. "I don't know who they offended, but her in-laws, who were also teachers, started having trouble as soon as she married into the family. They were constantly harassed and accused of taking bribes, and there were even more sinister rumors of her father-in-law being inappropriate with students. The scandal blew up; it was all over the internet, with people slandering them, doxxing their address, throwing paint and eggs on their house. Their neighborhood even petitioned to have them kicked out.

They called the police, but the evidence was stacked against them. The school fired both of them. Eventually, they had no choice but to sell their house. But before they could, her husband was in a severe car accident and needed expensive medical treatment. They had to rent a place and use all the money from the sale of their house for his hospital bills."

Cordelia continued, "Kaitlyn has a degree in business management, but ever since their family's collapse, she's been unable to find work. For years, they relied on her husband's salary, and after his disability, with no income from the in-laws and their daughter's tuition being such a large expense, she had to take on the hardest and most exhausting jobs."

Vivienne frowned. "Isn't the tuition for Thaddeus's preschool quite steep? At least fifty thousand a year, right? With their family in such dire straits, why not transfer to a less expensive school?"

Thaddeus wasn't attending a fancy private school. Dorian and Cordelia didn't want him to grow up feeling like a little lordling, so they chose a moderately priced preschool.

But in Imperial City, everything's expensive. Even a mid-range preschool cost fifty thousand a year. For the Hawthorn family, that tuition was a drop in the bucket, but for Amelia's mother, it was a fortune.

"I've wondered about that, too. It's strange," Cordelia said, "Kaitlyn did try to transfer Amelia to another school, but every time she found a decent one and approached them, they rejected Amelia, saying she didn't meet their admission standards. Every preschool in Rivenwood gave the same excuse. She couldn't just not send her child to school, so she had to work even more jobs."

Cordelia sighed again. "I've bumped into Kaitlyn a few times when picking up Thaddeus. Thaddeus and Isolde are quite fond of Amelia, and sometimes we chat. I was surprised to learn that she was delivering takeout and waitressing..."

After bumping into Kaitlyn a few times, Cordelia was impressed by her temperament. However, she found it weird that Kaitlyn was working multiple jobs. After all, with her education, she could easily make more in a month at a company than working five odd jobs.

Cordelia had questioned Kaitlyn about it before, but all she got was a wry smile in response. It was someone else's business, so she didn't pry further.

Then, one Friday, after a particularly hectic day at work, Cordelia was running more than an hour late to pick up Thaddeus. When she arrived, only Thaddeus and Amelia were left without their parents to collect them.

On her way out with Thaddeus, he realized he had forgotten his drawing book and went back to retrieve it. That was when she noticed Amelia still waiting, the teacher frantically trying to reach her mother.

Seeing Amelia in tears, Cordelia couldn't stand it and offered to take her to her mother's workplace.

She knew where Kaitlyn worked from their previous conversations. The teacher finally got through to Kaitlyn, who agreed, and Cordelia took Amelia with her.

Kaitlyn was working at a luxurious hotel, which was strange. Since she seemingly couldn't find a job anywhere else, luxurious hotels shouldn't be an exception. Yet, that particular hotel oddly recruited her.

When Cordelia arrived with Thaddeus and Amelia, she saw Kaitlyn being bullied by a brassy-looking woman. The woman was demanding compensation for a supposedly custom-made cup worth half a million, insisting Kaitlyn kneel and apologize.

Cordelia intervened, but the woman was relentless, threatening to call the police if she didn't get an apology and compensation.

Kaitlyn seemed terrified of the police and offered to sign an IOU, promising to pay back the money monthly. The woman gave her a week to come up with the money or face legal action.

Reluctantly, Kaitlyn signed the IOU, committing to paying the sum within a week.

After the woman left, Cordelia got the lowdown and discovered that she hadn't actually broken the woman's cup. The woman had set her up.

Fuming, Cordelia urged her to call the cops, but Kaitlyn just gave a WOT

smile and said what Gbed would thaiide? No one in this world is going

to set things right for us."

Feeling helpless, Cordelia eventually discussed it with Dorian, and they decided to offer Kaitlym position as t company sBadihess Manager,

a salary of \$20,00 a month. To their surprise, Kaitlyn turned it down. She was grateful for the offer, but the salary wouldn't cover her family's expenses.

Cordelia never found out how Kaitlyn settled her debts. All she heard was that the poor woman had worked herself to the point of collapse, and there was no one to take care of her at home, let alone look after Amelia.

Cordelia had been meaning to visit Kaitlyn in the next couple of days, but when Thaddeus brought it up, she ended up discussing it a bit more with Vivienne.

Vivienne hadn't expected to stumble upon such a story. She was just there to pick up Thaddeus for a day of fun.

After thinking it over, Vivienne said to Thaddeus, "Alright, let's invite your classmate along too."

"You're the best!" Thaddeus danced around with glee.

Vivienne patted his head and proposed, "So we'll pick up Isolde first, then go for your friend?"

"Sounds great!" Thaddeus beamed with excitement.

Chapter 703

Vivienne left the Brooks household and immediately dialed Cecilia to let her know that she was taking Isolde out for some fun. By the time she arrived, Isolde was already waiting eagerly at the doorstep.

"Vivienne, I've missed you so much!" Isolde beamed with joy.

Warmed by the affectionate yearnings of both Isolde and Thaddeus, Vivienne took their hands and set off on their little adventure.

Amelia's home was situated in the suburbs, a good distance away. Vivienne navigated using the address Cordelia had given her, only to discover upon arrival that it was a run-down neighborhood.

Amelia lived in a storage room at the bottom of the apartment complex. Cordelia had mentioned that due to their inability to pay rent, they had no choice but to settle for a damp and affordable storage space.

Knocking on the door, it swung open quickly, revealing a woman in her thirties, looking worn and tired. Her clothing, washed countless times, had taken on a yellowish hue.

Vivienne froze at the sight of her. It was her!

Years ago, in Havenwood, her mother, under a concealed identity, was expelled from their home by Beatrice on a rainy day. With no transportation nearby and no shelter from the rain, a kind woman pulled up in her car, offering them help when they needed it the most.

At the time, Vivienne was unaware that with her mother's abilities, a simple phone call could have resolved their predicament, but her mother couldn't risk exposure by contacting anyone. Thus, the woman's assistance was a godsend.

Once in the woman's car, they learned she was a tourist caught in the Havenwood downpour. Dressed elegantly and possessing a generous heart, she booked them a hotel room and ordered them meals.

When the rain ceased the following day, the woman left them five hundred dollars, explaining she wouldn't be in Havenwood for long and, unlikely to help them again, wished them well for the future.

That sum may have been trivial to the woman then, but to Vivienne and her mother, Karen, it was a lifeline. Karen insisted that if Vivienne ever had the chance to repay the woman's kindness, she should do so twofold.

This memory had stayed with Vivienne. After reuniting with Karen, they discussed the incident. Vivienne questioned why, with her mother's capabilities, they had to struggle for money, even in hiding.

Karen explained that while she could've easily earned money, doing so would've drawn the attention of GTO and Vanguard Agency. Using her abilities might have led to their capture, and while Karen herself wasn't afraid, her primary concern was protecting Vivienne.

"Thaddeus, Isolde, what brings you here?" Kaitlyn was surprised to see Thaddeus and Isolde.

Cordelia hadn't informed her that Vivienne would be taking Amelia out, so she was unaware of their plans. "Mrs. Littleton, we've come to play with Amelia," Isolde said politely.

Kaitlyn smiled warmly. "Thank you for coming."

Then, turning to Vivienne, she asked curiously, "And who might you be?"

Thaddeus, gripping Vivienne's hand, excitedly introduced her. "This is my sister! She's taking us out today. Mrs. Littleton, my sister is really nice; she won't let us get lost."

"Your sister?" Kaitlyn looked puzzled. She had only met Thaddeus's mother before and not his sister. "Yep, yep, my sister is super pretty," Thaddeus gushed unabashedly. Kaitlyn couldn't help but laugh. Then she addressed Vivienne, "Well then, I hope you don't mind taking Amelia along."

Under normal circumstances, she didn't like to impose on others. But today, she felt unwell, weak to the point of being unable to stand and care for Amelia.

Vivienne was brought back to reality by Kaitlyn's words. She eyed Kaitlyn, lips pursed, then said softly, "Don't you recognize me?"

Kaitlyn looked taken aback. "I'm sorry, who are you?" She truly didn't have any recollection. "Twelve years ago, in Havenwood, you helped a mother and daughter, giving them five hundred dollars," Vivienne reminded her.

Kaitlyn stood still, took a moment to remember, and then her face lit up with recognition. "Oh, it's you! You've grown so much; I didn't recognize you at all!"

Vivienne's gaze drifted past Kaitlyn into the room behind her, her expression turning somber. "May I come in?" Kaitlyn's expression faltered. "It's quite a mess inside... I'm afraid..."

Before she could finish, Vivienne stepped inside, only to stop dead in her tracks.

This was no place for anyone to live.

It was a single room with three beds thrown together and clutter everywhere. Two elderly people were cooking on a makeshift stove in the corner while a man lay in a bed further in.

Upon seeing Vivienne enter, everyone paused, then turned to Kaitlyn with questioning looks. "Kaitlyn, who is this?" Kaitlyn had wanted to stop Vivienne, but failing to do so, she quickly explained, "Mom, Dad, she's a friend I knew from before."

Afterward, Kaitlyn, somewhat awkwardly, said to Vivienne, "Ms. Hawthorn, I'm sorry, but we really don't have anywhere to sit..."

Vivienne pressed her lips together, her fingers tightening at her side. After a moment, she managed a smile. "I'm fine standing, Kaitlyn. Don't worry about it."

Seeing that Vivienne didn't seem put off, Kaitlyn let out a sigh of relief then pointed to the two seniors and introduced them to Vivienne, "These are my in-laws, Sadie and Julian."

The elderly couple quickly extended their hands but stopped midway as if realizing something. They withdrew their hands and greeted her with warm smiles, "Hello there!"

Vivienne reached out, shaking their hands firmly. "Nice to meet you."

Witnessing this exchange, a nerve seemed to twinge in Kaitlyn's heart, and tears streamed down her face unexpectedly. Spotting her mother's tears, Amelia rushed to her side with concern. "Mom, why are you crying?"

Kaitlyn wiped her tears away, forcing a smile. "It's nothing, honey. Mommy is just..."

She was just overwhelmed.

Over the years, people had shunned their family, avoiding them as if they were a plague. The few friends who had stuck with them when they were down were considered kind, let alone those who would actually step into their home to shake hands with her in-laws.

Everyone seemed to think they were tainted.

The Hawthorn family had gained some prominence in Rivenwood, and Vivienne's outfit was clearly expensive. Kaitlyn hadn't expected her to show no disdain for them whatsoever.

Drying her eyes, Kaitlyn next pointed to a younger man and said to Vivienne, "This is my husband, Tyler."

The man was wheelchair-bound, unable to stand, bracing himself with his hands as he tried to shift forward slightly in greeting. Vivienne approached him and extended her hand. "Pleased to meet you!"

Tyler paused for a few seconds, then carefully reached out his hand. "And you too."

After the greetings, Vivienne turned to Kaitlyn and said, "Years ago, you gave us five hundred dollars during tough times. I've always remembered your kindness and have been looking for you ever since, wanting to repay that money."

She paused for a moment before adding with a slight grin, "But now, I don't want to pay you back anymore!"

Chapter 704

Kaitlyn blinked, slightly taken aback.

It wasn't that she felt there was anything wrong with Vivienne not repaying the money; after all, when she had helped them, she never expected anything in return.

But now, with Vivienne so earnestly declaring her intentions, Kaitlyn couldn't help but think Vivienne still looked down on them. Pressing her lips together, Kaitlyn said, "I never wanted anything in return when | helped you back then."

Vivienne glanced at her and remained silent.

Then, pulling out her smartphone, Vivienne dialed a number, "Send over three cars. I'll text you the address."

Hearing this, Kaitlyn's face fell, "Ms. Hawthorn, what are you trying to do?"

Vivienne pocketed her phone. "I'm moving you to another place."

Clutching Amelia tightly to her, Kaitlyn eyed Vivienne with hostility, "Ms. Hawthorn, I've done nothing to offend you. Twelve years ago, | helped you. Why are you making things difficult for me now?"

Sadie and Julian, overhearing the conversation, quickly joined her side, glaring at Vivienne defensively. Her husband, glaring helplessly at Vivienne, could only fret. "Making things difficult for you?" Vivienne echoed, a hint of something crossing her mind.

"Sorry, | should have been clearer. | don't intend to repay the money; instead, | want to arrange a new place for you to live. This place is too cramped; it's not suitable for you."

Kaitlyn felt embarrassed, "I'm sorry, | thought you were..." After years of being targeted by others, her mind jumped to the worst conclusion when Vivienne mentioned moving them.

Vivienne explained, "It's fine. | have a villa in Rivenwood that I've never lived in. You can stay there, and once you're settled, I'll transfer the deed to you."

The villa was a gift from Jasper. She had tried to refuse it, but the old man insisted, and she had no choice but to accept.

Initially, she had planned to buy a new place, but given Kaitlyn's current situation, purchasing a new house would take at least a few days, and this place was unbearable for even a day longer. She couldn't stand to see her benefactor living like this.

"No, no!" Kaitlyn immediately protested, "I only helped you a little back then; I can't accept such a large favor." Kaitlyn's in-laws also hurriedly chimed in, "Yes, young lady, we appreciate your kindness, but we're fine here." They understood the principle of not accepting a reward without merit.

Although Kaitlyn had helped the young woman before them years ago, accepting a villa in return was far too much.

"You can accept it," Vivienne insisted seriously. "If it weren't for your help back then, I don't know if my mother and I would have made it. Please don't refuse."

Kaitlyn sighed softly. "You're a good person for wanting to repay kindness, but I really can't take the villa, not to mention the expensive monthly maintenance fees we can't afford. Even if we moved in, we wouldn't be able to keep it."

Vivienne's gaze sharpened, "Is someone in Rivenwood giving you trouble?"

She had initially disregarded the rumors Cordelia mentioned because she didn't know Kaitlyn was her benefactor from years ago. Now, she realized Kaitlyn's family's current plight must be due to someone stirring up trouble.

Kaitlyn's eyes lowered. "I mistakenly trusted the wrong person. Ms. Hawthorn, I'm grateful you remember the past and want to repay me, but I truly can't accept it. Right now, I just hope my family can stay alive."

"Who is it?" Vivienne asked sternly. "Please don't ask. They... they're not people we can afford to offend," Kaitlyn said, her voice laced with dejection.

Before Vivienne could respond, a mocking voice rang from outside, "Oh, Kaitlyn, you've got visitors? I'm surprised anyone would bother with your door, given how down and out you've become."

Kaitlyn's face drained of color as she hurried outside. Seeing the newcomer, her face twisted with anger, "Victoria Abernathy, I've paid you back. What more do you want?"

Vivienne turned to see a woman in her thirties, flanked by several bodyguards, looking smug. "Oh, I'm just here to see if you're still kicking after selling your blood to repay me. I might have to pick up your corpse!" At this, Kaitlyn's in-laws turned pale. "Kaitlyn, you sold your blood?"

Kaitlyn took Sadie's hand, addressing her in-laws, "Mom, Dad, I had no choice but to sell my blood. I can't make half a million a week by just working."

"You foolish child, half a million — how much blood would you have to sell? Are you trying to kill yourself?" Sadie burst into tears. "What did our family do to deserve this? When will the heavens look down upon us and put an end to our suffering?"

Kaitlyn reassured her, "It's okay. I just need to rest a bit. But for the next few days, I'll need you and Dad to take care of Tyler."

Sadie replied, "We are family; there's no trouble. But you, you can't go back to work anytime soon. You need to rest."

Victoria, hands crossed over her chest, looked down her nose at them. "Even in these circumstances, you still protect this jinx?" Kaitlyn whirled around to stare her down. "Please leave our home. You are not welcome here!"

"You think I want to be in this dump?" Victoria said, pinching her nose in disgust. "I wouldn't bother if not for the secret recipe in your hands."

Kaitlyn snapped back, "I've told you, I'd rather die than give you the recipe!"

"Kaitlyn, don't be ungrateful. The Littleton family has fallen. The recipe is useless in your hands. What ig

of life have you fe@nhafthase years? eee and not only will you

get half a million, but you could also have a decent place to live and maybe even find a respectable job. Tell me, what good does opposing me do for you?"

Kaitlyn's heart clenched as memories flooded through her mind, a painful reminder of her turbulent past. She glared at Victoria with eyes as fierce as a tiger

and foolish

then, ignored my parents' advice, put my trust in Harrison Schram. Not only did I bring ruin upon my family, but even in death, they can't find peace. Victoria, what goes around comes around. You won't get away with this."

Victoria let out a mocking laugh. "You think the Almighty's keeping score? If that were true, would you still be at my mercy?"

Taking two steps forward, Victoria closed the gap between them to just

an arm's length. "Your life will

be a bit easier from here on out. Otherwise, mark my words, your troubles have only just begun."

"Over my dead body!" Kaitlyn hissed through clenched teeth.

Victoria's smile was twisted with malice. "Think withholding the recipe will save you? I'm curious to see how much blood you'll have to sell next time to get out of trouble."

Her gaze slid to Sadie and Julian, standing behind Kaitlyn, and her lips curled up in a sinister smirk. "Your husband's already bedridden. Imagine how much more 'fun' your life would be if your in-laws joined him."

Kaitlyn instinctively shielded Sadie and Julian behind her. "Target me all you want, but leave them out of this!"

"Target you? What's the fun in that? Your heart's as hard as iron. Even with your husband crippled, you refuse to give in. Let's see how you like it when your stubbornness leaves your whole family bedridden."

At Victoria's subtle cue, her henchmen moved in to grab Sadie and Julian.

But just as one of the goons reached out to touch Kaitlyn's in-laws, his wrist was seized in a vice-like grip, followed by a voice as cold as the grave, "Feeling immortal, are we? Or just itching to meet your maker?"

Chapter 705

The bodyguard wanted to fight back, but he found that he was not only immobilized, but his bones felt like they were shattering. His face was a picture of shock as he stared at Vivienne.

She was so strong!

How could such a young girl be so powerful? Who on earth was she?

With icy blue eyes that could freeze hell over, Vivienne coldly inquired, "What were you about to do?"

For reasons he couldn't fathom, locking eyes with Vivienne was like being cornered by a wolf. He had been a bodyguard for the Abernathy family for over two decades, trained in martial arts and bolstered by remarkable strength, but before this girl, he felt utterly insignificant.

The bodyguard remained silent for a moment before finally speaking, "I apologize. I was out of line." Vivienne glanced at him dismissively, shook his hand off, and casually wiped her hands with a tissue from her pocket.

It seemed like a gentle shake, but the bodyguard was flung several meters away. He had to use his own strength just to steady himself.

He looked up at Vivienne again and then turned to Victoria, speaking in a low voice, "Miss, we should leave." "Slap!"

Before the bodyguard could finish, Victoria's hand connected sharply with his face, followed by a furious scolding, "You useless thing! I sent you to deal with those two old fools, and you got weak at the knees over a pretty face? What use are you to me?"

The bodyguard took the slap without a hint of dissatisfaction, softly advising, "Miss, this person is very strong. With her here, we won't succeed today. Let's go back and devise a plan."

"Hmph! When I, Victoria Abernathy, want something, there's no need for planning. You're a failure, and now you want to teach me how to handle my affairs?"

Victoria glared at the bodyguard, then turned her attention to Vivienne. "I want to see what she can do about it!"

With that, she marched forward, hand raised to strike Vivienne, but before she could even swing, Vivienne kicked her away! "Thud!"

Victoria slammed against a wall several meters away, coughing up blood immediately.

"Miss!"

The bodyguard's face paled as he rushed to help Victoria to her feet.

Clutching her chest, Victoria looked at Vivienne in disbelief; she had been sent flying by a single kick without even a moment to react.

She wasn't some delicate flower — she was the heiress of the ancient warrior lineage, the Abernathy family. Martial training was her childhood bread and butter, and her inner energy was among the best in her family. Few in her family could match her.

Yet today, she didn't even have the chance to react before being kicked away.

"Who are you?" Victoria asked, eyeing Vivienne warily.

When did Kaitlyn acquaint herself with someone so formidable? She had never heard of her. "I'm your worst nightmare!" Vivienne replied with an expressionless face.

Victoria's face turned sour as she snapped at Vivienne, "Don't think because you know a few fighting tricks you can strut around here like some hotshot. I am Victoria Abernathy, the heiress of the ancient warrior lineage, the Abernathy family. Kaitlyn has offended us! Be smart and stay out of this."

Vivienne, hands in her pockets and eyes half-hidden by a curtain of hair, spoke with a voice as cold as the winter frost, "What if I insist on getting involved?"

The ancient warrior lineage?

Perfect!

She let Samantha go just to deal with the likes of the Abernathy family. Victoria narrowed her eyes. "Then you won't live to see tomorrow!"

"Haha!" Vivienne laughed, "I've been told that my whole life, yet here I am, alive and kicking. Want to know what happened to those who said that to me?"

Victoria stayed silent.

Vivienne stepped forward, her tone indifferent. "They're still alive. Some are in my dog kennels, getting their body slowly devoured by dogs. Others are in my wolf sanctuary, keeping the wolves company, and a few are in my lab, serving as living specimens." She paused for a moment, looking directly at Victoria. "Where would you like to go?"

A sudden panic gripped Victoria. For some reason, she believed this girl's words. She was too strong, and Victoria knew she was no match for her.

Victoria's thoughts raced before she finally spoke, "You can protect Kaitlyn once, but can you guard her for a lifetime? What she has is something all ancient warrior lineages covet. Aside from my family, there are many families who will cause her trouble. No matter how strong you are, can you stand against the ancient warrior lineages? I'd advise you to mind your own business to avoid getting burnt."

She wasn't foolish; she knew better than to pick a fight with someone so powerful. Her only aim was to retrieve what Kaitlyn held, not to invite trouble for herself. Especially not trouble as formidable as this.

Vivienne remained silent, just watching her. But that look alone told Victoria everything she needed to know — Kaitlyn's problem was now Vivienne's concern.

Narrowing her eyes, Victoria finally said, "At least have the guts to tell me your name."

"Vivienne Hawthorn!" Vivienne said plainly.

"Fine! Just wait, this isn't over. Since you're so keen on getting involved, prepare for the wrath of the ancient warrior lineages!" With that, Victoria left, supported by her bodyguard.

After they were gone, Isolde tilted her head, puzzled. "Vivienne, why didn't you teach the bad guys a lesson like you usually do?" Vivienne usually made sure any troublemakers got what they deserved. Today, it was merely a kick.

Isolde had no idea how heavy that kick was. All she knew was that it had happened.

Vivienne patted Isolde's head and said with a smile, "Sweetie, keeping the bad guys around can be useful." Her gaze followed the direction in which Victoria had vanished, her eyes narrowing slightly.

"Ms. Hawthorn, thank you."

It wasn't until Victoria was out of sight that Kaitlyn snapped back to reality.

She was amazed at Vivienne's strength to have sent Victoria packing so easily.

She knew just how formidable Victoria was; if she could have stood up to her, their family wouldn't have fallen on such hard times.

Vivienne's eyes lost their icy edge, and she spoke softly, "I'm not sending you packing; you're coming with me now!"

"Yes, I know it's not safe here, but I don't want to be a burden to you," Kaitlyn said. "I'm an awkward escapee. Okay, Ms. Hawthorn, but the people I've crossed are no ordinary folks; they're powerful. If it weren't for the item I possess, I'd probably be dead already."

Kaitlyn sighed. "I'm truly grateful for your help during our family's tough times, but please, stay out of this." No sooner had she finished speaking than several cars rolled in.

Matthew stepped out of one vehicle and approached Vivienne with respect, "Vivienne, the house has been cleaned up. We can move in right away."

Vivienne nodded. "There's a sick man inside. Carry him to the car. As for the belongings, take what's useful, discard the rest." "Understood."

Without a word, Matthew directed his men to enter the house, and they carried out Kaitlyn's husband.

Seeing this, Kaitlyn hurriedly said, "Ms. Hawthorn..."

Before she could finish, Vivienne cut her off. "Kaitlyn, even if you won't admit it, you're young, and seeing her mom get pushed around all the time — can you imagine the stress on her? Besides, this place isn't fit for your husband's recovery."

Kaitlyn thought of her husband's leg and hung her head in sorrow, "I've failed my family; my husband's disability is my fault. |..." "I can heal him!" Vivienne interrupted her. Kaitlyn looked up sharply. "You can heal him? But his leg is gone, crushed under a car..."

"Trust me! I can!" Vivienne said with utmost conviction.

Chapter 706

Kaitlyn stared at Vivienne in shock, her mind replaying Vivienne's words over and over. She had just claimed that she could heal Tyler's legs.

Life hadn't been kind to her; she had been living worse than a stray, let alone curing Tyler's leg.

After Tyler's car accident years ago, his family had sold their house and spent every penny on his medical bills, only to be told that his legs were beyond repair.

She never imagined that she would hear someone say that there was a chance to heal Tyler's legs. This was truly the first piece of good news she had heard in years.

It took Kaitlyn a moment to snap back to reality. Then, she almost fell to her knees in front of Vivienne. Vivienne quickly steadied her.

Kaitlyn, unable to kneel, clutched Vivienne's arm, tears streaming down her face. "Ms. Hawthorn, please, I beg you to save my husband. If you can heal him, I'll do anything for you, anything at all."

Sadie and Julian also came over, and without a word, they knelt before Vivienne.

Vivienne, still holding Kaitlyn, couldn't free her hands to help them up, so they just knelt there before her. "Ms. Hawthorn, we're begging you, please save our son. If you can get him back on his feet, we'll be indebted to you forever."

Vivienne massaged her temples and had Kaitlyn stand properly before helping her in-laws up, saying somewhat resignedly, "I've given my word, and I intend to heal your son. Please, no more kneeling."

Vivienne wouldn't have had the patience for anyone else, but Kaitlyn was her benefactor, so she tried to be as gentle as possible. "Kaitlyn, pack your things. We're leaving now."

Kaitlyn hesitated, but seeing Vivienne's seriousness, she only paused for two seconds before agreeing, "Okay, I'll come with you."

The Littletons didn't have much of value, but Kaitlyn still brought some essentials.

In her eyes, staying at Vivienne's house was already a huge favor; she didn't want to impose any further.

When Vivienne saw them loading their pots, pans, and bags into the car, her eyebrow twitched involuntarily.

After a moment, she spoke up, "Leave those behind. I've had everything you'll need bought already."

Vivienne glanced at their belongings, adding, "And don't bother with clothes either. I'll have someone shop for those, too." "How can we possibly accept that..."

Kaitlyn began to protest but was cut off by Vivienne, "Kaitlyn, please do as I say. Don't feel burdened by this."

"But..."

Before Kaitlyn could argue further, Vivienne continued, "That five hundred dollars you gave us may have been a small gesture for you, but for my mother and me, it was a lifesaving grace. What I own now is far more than just a villa; what I'm giving you is but a fraction of my wealth."

Seeing Vivienne's resolve, Kaitlyn nodded reluctantly. "Alright then."

Though she had agreed, she thought to herself that if she ever got the chance, she would repay Vivienne. The five hundred dollars she had given didn't warrant all this.

Soon, they were all in the car.

Vivienne rode with the kids in Matthew's car and turned to Thaddeus and Isolde, "I'm sorry, Thaddeus, Isolde, I have urgent matters to attend to today and can't take you out. I'll drop you off at the Hawthorn Mansion. You can spend time with Amelia, and I'll take you out tomorrow."

Though a bit disappointed at not going out, Thaddeus and Isolde understood that Vivienne was helping a family in need and happily agreed.

Before long, the car stopped in front of Everview Villas, a neighborhood of affluence. As they stepped inside, Kaitlyn and her family felt out of place.

Especially Kaitlyn, who felt as though she was dreaming.

It had been over a decade since the Littletons had fallen from grace, and she hadn't seen a villa since. Now, faced with this reality, it all seemed surreal.

Vivienne led them in, where Matthew's crew had already cleaned the villa and prepared the rooms. Vivienne had Matthew lay Tyler on the sofa and began examining him without delay. Kaitlyn and her in-laws watched nervously from the side, barely daring to breathe.

Twenty minutes later, Vivienne stood up and announced, "It's not a big problem. Starting the day after tomorrow, I'll come every morning to perform acupuncture and apply a medicinal salve I've made. If all goes well, he should be on his feet within a month."

Kaitlyn and her in-laws gaped in amazement. "Really? He can truly walk again?"

To be honest, while Kaitlyn was shocked and hoped against hope when Vivienne said she could heal Tyler, she didn't believe it for the most part.

Vivienne, who looked to be in her early twenties, seemed too young. Kids her age were busy with fashion and dating, not medicine. She might know a few tricks, but Kaitlyn suspected her words were just to comfort her.

But hearing Vivienne confirm it, Kaitlyn was astounded. She had seen Vivienne press down on Tyler's leg, eliciting a slight response in those legs that had never moved in years. Although she didn't understand how, the prospect of Tyler walking again was like a beam of light in her life.

Chapter 707

After Vivienne's departure, Kaitlyn broke down in tears.

Seeing her distress, Sadie quickly took her by the hand. "Kaitlyn, sweetheart, what's the matter?"

"Mom, it's nothing. I'm just so happy," Kaitlyn said, wiping away her tears. "I can finally see a glimmer of hope." Sadie, moved by her words, began to cry as well. "Yes, after all these years, we can finally see some hope."

Kaitlyn held her mother-in-law's hand tightly and said in a low voice, "I'm sorry, Mom and Dad, for all the trouble I've caused over the years. I'm so grateful that you've stood by me through everything."

"What are you talking about, you silly girl?" Sadie said, patting her hand. "The moment you married Tyler, you became part of this family. Besides, do you think we're the type to blame you for things beyond your control? None of this is your fault. It's those people who've hurt your family, and now they're after ours."

Thank goodness for Ms. Hawthorn. She's no pushover, and with her around, we don't have to worry about those treasures being stolen from you."

Kaitlyn nodded. "I never imagined that a favor I did years ago would be remembered for so long. I just hope that once Tyler's leg heals, we can all work hard to get back on our feet. And when we're financially stable, we'll repay Ms. Hawthorn."

"That's right," Sadie agreed. "Ms. Hawthorn's help is too generous. If it weren't for her, your father and I might have been left incapacitated. We'll pay her back. It's the right thing to do."

Meanwhile, Julian, after a moment of contemplation, spoke up. "Kaitlyn, I've been thinking. Maybe you should entrust the treasure to Ms. Hawthorn. What do you think?"

Kaitlyn paused, contemplating the suggestion.

Julian continued, "Ms. Hawthorn seems very capable. She's not afraid of the Abernathy family, and she doesn't seem to care much for ancient warrior lineages either. If that's the case, she can surely protect those treasures."

Tyler nodded in agreement. "Kaitlyn, I think Dad's right. It's not that we're afraid or avoiding trouble, but the treasure is too important. We don't want it falling into the wrong hands. With our current situation, it's nearly impossible to keep it safe...

Today proved it. If it hadn't been for Ms. Hawthorn, Mom and Dad would have been harmed. Moving forward, the family would be relying solely on you. And even then, they wouldn't stop pursuing you. Maybe it's better to entrust the treasure to Ms. Hawthorn. She seems trustworthy and unlikely to use them for harm."

Kaitlyn, her gaze lowered, thought for a while before speaking. "To be honest, I did consider this. But I don't know if Ms. Hawthorn would be willing to take it."

"Why don't we ask her when she comes over the day after tomorrow?" suggested Tyler.

"Sounds good."

Across town, the Abernathy estate was in chaos. Victoria Abernathy stormed in, rage coursing through her veins, and began to smash everything in sight.

Her father, Gavin Abernathy, in the study with Harrison Schram discussing business, heard the commotion and walked out to investigate.

Seeing the mess, Gavin bellowed, "Damn it! What's wrong with you?"

Victoria, not caring about Gavin's anger and spotting Harrison, grabbed a vase and hurled it at him. "Useless! Weren't you the one who said Kaitlyn had no one left who could help her? Then how come today, she had a young woman by her side who beat me with a single move?"

Harrison saw the vase coming but stood his ground, the vase shattering against his head as blood began to trickle down. Gavin, witnessing this, slapped Victoria. "Have you lost your mind? Is this how I taught you to behave, attacking your husband?"

Victoria, clutching her cheek where she'd been hit, had tears swirling in her eyes. "Dad, I'm your daughter. Why do you always side with him? Don't forget how the Littleton family fell. If he could bring ruin to the Littletons, he could do the same to us, the Abernathys."

"Silence!" Gavin's voice was a cold command. "I know what kind of man Harrison is better than you do. Remember, he is your husband. Stop treating him with such disdain, or else I'll have you out of this house!"

Gavin turned to Harrison and asked, "Are you alright?" "I'm fine, Dad," Harrison replied, wiping the blood from his forehead.

Turning to Victoria, he said with a forced smile, "My dear, are you upset about Kaitlyn? Is she still refusing to hand over the treasure?"

His smile harbored zero sincerity.

Victoria glared back, ready to lash out, but was stopped by Gavin's icy stare. Swallowing her retort,

bitterly, "It's plopjuatthat She won't take treasure. She has

someone powerful behind her, someone so young yet with unfathomable skills. Walter and I couldn't even land a hit; we were easily defeated."

Walter was Victoria's bodyguard.

Harrison was taken aback, but before he could respond, Gavin interjected, "I personally trained Walter. His skills are among the best in the Abernathy family's guards. How could someone defeat him so easily? Did you do something foolish again?"

Without knowing the whole picture, Gavin had already placed the blame on Victoria, nearly cle hertothe) essa With cary, she r His "What do you mean | did something foolish? Dad, everything I've done was at your bidding. How can you blame me when things don't go your way?"

"You..."

Just as Gavin was about to let loose a string of expletives, he heard Victoria exclaim, "You ant te get | y! chapranineat a lyn has, curry favor with the Grimshaw family, use me as cannon fodder! You drove Leland away and forced me to marry this backstabbing weasel. And in the end, it's all my fault?"

If it wasn't for Leland, do you think I'd be willing to do your dirty work? What business do | have with that treasure? What grudge do | hold against Kaitlyn? You listen to this weasel every day, exploiting me. Are you really my father?"

"You insolent fool! How dare you speak to me like that!" Gavin, red with rage, clutched at his chest and nearly lost his footing. At that moment, a woman about Victoria's age stepped forward, supporting an elegantly dressed lady in her forties.

"Sis, how can you talk to Dad like that? He loves you and spoils you, but you can't just abuse his affection, act like an outlaw, and show no respect, not even to your own father." The woman, with her serpentine waist, seemed to ooze a cunning charm from every pore.

She was Victoria's stepsister, Sophie.

Seeing this woman, Victoria was instantly incensed and barked, "Shut your mouth! This is none of your business! A bastard child who should be hidden away, just like your mother—you're both cut from the same cloth!"

Sophie's face paled as she caught the words, and the woman beside her shifted uneasily. Without hesitation, the woman clung to Gavin, tears streaming down her face as if on cue.

"Darling," she wept, "I don't know what I've done wrong. Since the crack of dawn, I've been slaving away over a hot stove to prepare your favorite health tonic, not even meeting Victoria. And no sooner had I finished than I was met with a barrage of insults.

I know she dislikes me, but I am her elder, after all. And to be humiliated in front of all the housemaids—what about my dignity?" At the sight of her tears, Gavin's heart clenched. Without a second thought, he swung at Victoria.

This time, Victoria didn't just stand there; she dodged with a swift move. She scoffed coldly at Gavin, "You think you can hit me? Do you really think I was born to be trampled upon?"

Enraged, Gavin grabbed the fruit bowl from the table and hurled it at her. "I've had enough of your insolence!" With a swift kick, Victoria sent the fruit bowl flying. "And I've had enough of you!"

Glaring at Gavin, she roared, "I've had enough of you long ago! For this woman, you abandoned my mother, threw her out, leaving her in a vegetative state, and you live happily ever after with this bitch and her daughter. You use me to do your dirty work for your own selfish desires—why should I? I'm done!"

With that, Victoria stormed out.

Gavin bellowed from behind, "Get back here!"

Victoria didn't look back, striding out the door. Once outside the villa, her expression of rage vanished. Walter approached her respectfully, "Miss."

As they walked, Victoria asked, "Is the new place ready?"

Walter nodded. "All set. Kaitlyn and her family can move in tomorrow."

"You didn't use our men, right?" Victoria pressed.

Walter hesitated before speaking, "Miss, I don't understand. If you want to help Kaitlyn, why do you give her trouble on the one hand and assist her in secret on the other, making her despise you? Is it worth it?"

Victoria gave him a sidelong glance. "What do you know?"

She looked back at the Abernathy estate. "That dog, Harrison, and that Bitch, Sophie, are watching me like hawks. If I openly helped Kaitlyn, it would only arouse their suspicions. That foolish woman, to risk everything for something so fragile, is utterly stupid."

Though Walter's lips were sealed, he knew Victoria envied Kaitlyn's resilience.

Kaitlyn fought against the injustices of fate, standing tall even when life knocked her down. Victoria admired her spirit, and when she learned that Tyler's leg had been deliberately broken by one of Harrison's goons, leaving the Littleton family desperate and without a buyer for their home, it was Victoria who covertly purchased it.

In every hardship the Littleton family faced, she found the right moment to offer help without revealing her identity.

Like the time Victoria had to pressure Kaitlyn to hand over the treasure and then smashed a glass, leaving Kaitlyn with a debt of half a million. When she heard Kaitlyn planned to sell her blood to repay it, Victoria arranged for an exorbitant sum to be paid for the blood.

Kaitlyn had only given a pint but received half a million in return. Her frail appearance was due, in part, to regular malnutrition rather than blood loss.

Walter broke the silence. "Doesn't today's outburst expose your intentions?"

Victoria's expression was icy. "That's precisely what I intended. Keep an eye on them for me and report back with any developments."

Walter nodded. "Understood."

Victoria stepped closer, eyeing him. "Has my father not noticed anything off about you?"

Walter stepped back, bowing his head. "Miss, I've been loyal to you. I've always been flawless in my deception before him." A cold smile played on Victoria's lips. "You'd better be. Those who betray me meet a grim end."

"I'm well aware, Miss," Walter affirmed.

Elsewhere.

After leaving the Littleton residence.

Percival finished his work and called Vivienne to pick her up.

He found Vivienne on the phone when he arrived. Without disturbing her, he simply opened the car door for her.

Once in the car, Vivienne's conversation ended with a command, "Dig up everything on the Littleton family. Leave no stone unturned."

After she hung up, Percival asked, "What about the Littleton family?" He hadn't heard of any Littletons crossing her path recently.

Vivienne pocketed her phone, explaining, "I ran into someone who once saved my life, a member of the once-prosperous Littleton family from Rivenwood. They've run into some trouble."

"Rivenwood's Littleton family?" Percival pondered for a moment. "The ones who went bankrupt years ago?"

"You're aware?" Vivienne inquired.

"Sure, I know a bit," Percival said, "The Littletons are an ancient warrior lineage, too. Rumor has it they got booted for crossing the Littleton warrior lineage. About a decade ago, there was a scandal with the Littleton product line—people died, their finances tanked, and Mr. and Mrs. Littleton... they both took a dive off their penthouse."

Percival glanced over at Vivienne. "That's about the extent of it. M

. 7000! family doesn't really relate to it. Was Mr. Littleton some kind of benefactor to you?"

"His daughter," Vivienne clarified, recounting the events to Percival before adding, "The Littletons are the original side of the ancient warrior lineages. Looks like the grudge goes way back."

Percival squinted. "Ancient warrior lineage again? Which one is it this time?" "The Abernathy family," Vivienne inquired, "How much do you know about them?" At her words, Percival's expression darkened visibly. "I know plenty about the Abernathys."

Vivienne raised an eyebrow; she had never heard Mr. Wolf claim to be so knowledgeable about any family before. It seemed the Abernathys were not to be underestimated.

Percival looked straight ahead, his voice ice-cold, "I have an unsettled score with them!"

"What kind of score?" Vivienne was genuinely surprised.

For Mr. Wolf to openly speak of a vendetta—there weren't many in the world who could provoke that. Percival pursed his lips, lost in thought, and remained silent for a long while.

Finally, he said slowly, "You know I have an aunt who's been abroad for decades and hasn't returned, right?" Vivienne nodded. "Yes."

She didn't know much about this aunt; Richard had only mentioned her in passing.

But in the Ellington family, this aunt seemed to be a taboo subject. Vivienne had known Percival for quite some time and had never heard him speak of her.

If it weren't for the Abernathy family coming up today, Percival probably would've never mentioned her.

Chapter 709

Percival's fingers tightened on the steering wheel, the stoic expression on his face tinged with frost.

After a moment's silence, he spoke slowly, "My aunt didn't go abroad. She married into the Abernathy family; she became their family head, Preston Abernathy's wife."

Vivienne was surprised. "So the Victoria | met today is your aunt's daughter?"

She didn't know what kind of person Percival's aunt was, but judging by Percival's demeanor, he must have been quite fond of her.

Although, as far as Vivienne was concerned, with the exception of Richard and Percival, she hadn't met anyone decent from the Ellington family. Still, she had a feeling that this aunt must have been a good person.

But her daughter...

Tsk.

She didn't know what to make of her.

Percival nodded. "That's likely."

Vivienne arched an eyebrow. "What do you mean 'likely'?"

Percival pursed his lips before explaining, "When my aunt insisted on marrying Preston, it caused a huge rift with my grandfather. He even threatened to disown her, but she wouldn't budge. Grandpa got so angry, he actually cut all ties and forbade anyone from contacting her."

Glancing at Vivienne, he continued, "In the Ellington family, next to my uncle, my aunt was always the kindest to me. After she married, I reached out to her. We met for lunch once, but then she told me never to contact her again. She was too proud. And since then, there hasn't been any communication.

I had to dig around for information about her on my own, which wasn't easy. The ancient warrior lineages are secretive, and after marrying, my aunt became even more reclusive, making it harder to find anything out. Later, I heard she had a daughter, but I found very little about her."

Taking a deep breath, he carried on, "I eventually heard that my aunt was cast out and had become comatose. I only learned her daughter's name after that. But whether this Victoria is really her child, I have no way of knowing."

Vivienne frowned, slightly perplexed. "So, is this Preston a looker or something?" Percival was momentarily confused by her question. "What?"

"I mean—she cut ties with her family for a marriage that ended with her being thrown out and turned into a vegetable. Was it because Preston was so handsome that he completely bewitched her?"

Vivienne couldn't think of any other reason why Percival's aunt would be so adamant about marrying Preston. What was she hoping to gain from such a scoundrel?

After a pause, Percival said, "I once asked my aunt why she was so set on marrying Preston, but she never told me." Preempting her next question, he added, "As for why my grandfather disapproved, one reason was the general distrust our

ordinary family had for ancient warrior lineages. Also, Grandpa once overheard Preston on the phone saying something like,

"Darling, don't worry. She'll definitely marry me'. Vivienne massaged her temples. "So, Preston had another lover even before marrying your aunt?" Percival confirmed with a grunt.

For a moment, Vivienne was at a loss for words.

Mr. Wolf's aunt was lovestruck, wasn't she? Ignoring her father, succumbing to the words of a cad?

"When we first met, you might remember | was looking for the Specter Healer to treat my aunt's illness," Percival's voice grew colder as he said, "After discovering you were the Specter Healer, | started to look for her whereabouts, but so far, I've found nothing. The Abernathy vendetta, however, I've never forgotten."

Vivienne took his hand softly. "Let's take our revenge together."

A softness touched Percival's heart. "Alright."

The car continued its journey, the two of them falling into silence.

After a long while, Percival spoke up again, "Vivienne, do you get the feeling someone is playing a big game of chess?" Vivienne nodded. "Yeah, I've felt it, too."

She hadn't been aware before, but after Samantha was rescued, she realized that GTO might just be a pawn in someone else's game, especially concerning that mysterious woman and the ancient warrior lineages.

She still hadn't figured out who that woman was. Their goals seemed linked to immortality but also went beyond it. There were other, unknown agendas at play. The Abernathy family's bold move today suggested that some people were getting impatient.

"Today | ran into a man, the War God of Veridia," Percival said, "He spoke in riddles, almost as if to warn me. Vivienne, it looks like we've got a tough battle ahead."

Vivienne's laugh was light. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Let's first settle the score for your aunt. And as for this War God, as long as he doesn't bother us, we don't need to pay him any mind."

Asmirk twitched at Percival's lips, thinking, "You're the first person I've met who's so dismissive of the War God." Just then, Percival's phone rang with an unfamiliar number.

Percival glanced at the caller ID flashing on his phone screen, a number he didn't recognize. Without a second thought, he hit the decline button.

But the phone was relentless; no sooner had he dismissed the call than it started ringing again. With a scowl darkening his features, Percival answered the call.

As soon as he did, the caller got straight to the point. "This is Lucas Toynbee." Percival's expression shifted dramatically. "Mr. Toynbee!" Whatever Lucas said next, Percival cast a sidelong glance at Vivienne before replying, "Yes, we'll be right there." After hanging up, Vivienne, noticing the gravity on his face, asked, "What's wrong?" Percival moistened his lips before speaking. "Mr. Toynbee wants to see us!" Vivienne paused, a flicker of confusion crossing her face. "Who's this Mr. Toynbee?" She had rifled through her mental Rolodex but came up empty—Lucas Toynbee was not a name she recognized. Percival said flatly, "He's the commander of the military district!" "Oh!" Vivienne nodded, a hint of recognition in her voice. "Does he need us for something?" Percival just stared at her.

Could she tone down that 'I couldn't care less' attitude? Lucas's qattiority uld-sepe-shinées down the spine of anyone else in the district.

Clearing his throat, Percival added, "He didn't say what it's about, just that we need to go over there."

"Well, let's grab some dinner first; I'm starving," Vivienne said, her gtamiach neguign emcee had been hours since breakfast, and she hadn't had a bite since.

Percival was slightly exasperated. "Vivienne... Lucas said now."

Vivienne rolled her eyes. "Even if the sky were falling, a girl's aa teat |) right? ha oni nder get a

ktek out of starving his people?"

Percival was at a loss for words.

Chapter 710

In the suburbs, at an expansive estate.

A woman in a crimson gown lounged languidly on a sofa, a glass of merlot in her hand. "Take this little toy and have a go at the people on the list. Remember, you must succeed with Karen."

"But won't this spook the target?" A young man's voice crackled through the static, cautious and hesitant. Vivienne would immediately recognize the voice. The woman swirled her wine, half her face lost in shadows. "That's the point. Where's the fun if she doesn't notice?"

Her fingers, painted a vibrant scarlet, tapped against the glass. "If you're scared, I can always find someone else. But then, the poison inside you will remain without an antidote."

"No, no... I'll do it!" The man hastily replied, panic in his voice. "But you know I'm no match for Vivienne. Plus, there's always someone guarding Karen. I..."

"So troublesome," the woman muttered, clearly annoyed. She wouldn't be wasting her time with this incompetent if she didn't have to conserve her resources.

Leaning forward, she set her glass down and turned to another figure cloaked in black. "You, head over to Rivenwood. Make sure you bring back a sample of Karen's DNA."

The figure before her, eyes cast down, responded with a reverent "Yes, ma'am."

Meanwhile, having sorted their basic needs, Vivienne and Percival had just arrived at the Oasis Resort, where Lucas lived. The guard at the gate swept his gaze over them, offering a crisp salute, "Good evening, please present your identification."

Percival wasn't surprised and handed over the pre-prepared IDs, explaining to Vivienne, "Lucas, being a man of importance, always has tight security. Any outsider needs a thorough check and a pat-down."

"A pat-down?" Vivienne's gaze flickered with amusement.

No wonder Mr. Wolf insisted she leave all her weapons in the car.

As she scanned the robust guards, she quipped, "Don't you have any female officers? | wouldn't want Mr. Wolf to get jealous." Percival rolled his eyes internally: So now I'm the jealous type, huh?

Vivienne: Aren't you?

The guard, after ensuring their IDs were in order, returned it and was stunned to hear Vivienne's question.

Looking at his colleague, he thought, "Does working as a guard involve being forced to watch couples show off their love?" However, looking at Vivienne's curvy body, the two young guards blushed slightly and said, "One moment, I'll get Cassie." Women rarely frequented here, and the air itself seemed to carry a decidedly masculine charge.

In Lucas' residence, other than the maid, Cassie, who had worked for him for years, and his daughter, who held a position in a certain secretive department, everything else was male. Plus, even the highly important people who visited were mostly males. Thus, there were no female guards.

Thankfully, Cassie, with years of service under her belt, stepped forward to search Vivienne. Finding no threats, she ushered them into the Oasis Resort.

"Mr. Toynbee, Mr. Ellington and Ms. Hawthorn have arrived," she announced upon reaching the study.

Inside the study, Lucas sat in a posture that commanded respect. His aging eyes, sharp as ever, regarded the man before him. "Have them wait in the living room; I'll be down shortly."

Once Cassie's footsteps faded, Arthur spoke up, "I'll leave you to it, Mr. Toynbee. I'll come by tomorrow." Lucas dismissed him with a wave. "No need, sit behind the screen. It won't hurt to listen."

Arthur hesitated but complied.

Was Lucas trying to limit his interaction with Percival?

Hidden in the shadows behind the screen, Arthur's eyes darkened with thought.

Soon after, Cassie led Percival and Vivienne into the study.

Upon entering, Vivienne felt a crushing aura of authority. She casually followed Percival, both greeting the elder statesman in unison, "Good evening, Mr. Toynbee."

They also discreetly assessed the seated figure of authority.

Vivienne had worked with many high-profile individuals, men of varying demeanors, but none quite like Lucas. He had an air of danger about him, a grizzled tiger that commanded fear and respect despite his age.

"Have a seat." Lucas nodded slightly. Percival guided Vivienne to sit across from Lucas, his voice laced with deference, "What brings us here this late, Mr. Toynbee?"

Cassie served coffee and left the room. Lucas took a sip before speaking, "The reason I've called you tonight is to relay a message from the higher-ups."

Vivienne's gaze remained calm, but her mind was racing. What matter required bypassing the Vanguard Agency and needed the commander to deliver?

Percival appeared to share her thoughts, his lips parting to question.

Lucas, as if anticipating their inquiries, began, "The Vanguard Agency is currently unstable,

after reorganization tie Pop brass Re iraene relying on it. Percival, your track record and abilities are well recognized. Thus, they wish for you to establish a new department dedicated to national security."

Vivienne glanced at Percival, unsurprised to meet his gaze. The unspoken understanding between them was palpable. Percival's voice was calm but pointed. "I suspect that's not the only directive from above." Veridia already had its security bureaus. Creating another department would overlap with the existing ones.

Lucas didn't bother hiding the truth. "That's the main task, indeed. However, there's another assignment they want you to handle."

"What might that be?" Percival and Vivienne asked in unison.

Lucas's gaze was sharp as a rapier as it swept over the two of them. "You're now aware of the existence of the ancient warrior lineages. In the annals of Veridia, str ing, tigysartds of Jags no one knows exactly how long these families have walked the earth. In the past, due to their services, and at a time when the country was in dire straits, the leaders of the day chose not to take any action against them. Even over the years, successive Veridian leaders have refrained from suppressing them excessively."

Vivienne and Percival listened in silence, their eyes different yet shining with the same intensity. Perhaps they already had an inkling of what the other purpose was.

Sure enough, Lucas's tone, which had been somewhat wistful, suddenly sharpened. "However, members of the ancient warrior lineage must m never ascend ta Pigh edsitiohe within the caahinoTwo powers keeping each other in check, and now, those people are getting too audacious. The higher-ups have noticed their ambitions to usurp control but lack the evidence to act. Your other mission is to delve into the secrets of these ancient warrior lineages and uncover evidence of their subversive activities!"

"I have a question," Vivienne interjected calmly.