

Million-Dollar 711

Chapter 711

Lucas narrowed his eyes, a sign that he was contemplating the silence of Vivienne, who had been quiet up until this point. Despite her silence, he knew of her past accomplishments and didn't underestimate the young woman.

"What is it?" he prompted.

Vivienne cocked an eyebrow, her voice laced with skepticism. "With all the higher-up hotshots, why send us?" This mission reeked of danger.

If the higher-ups couldn't find the evidence, what made Lucas think they could?

Dealing with a single GTO was tough enough, and they still hadn't figured out who was pulling Samantha's strings. She wasn't about to take on a suicide mission without good reason.

Caught off guard by her directness, Lucas hesitated. His gaze settled on Percival, whose deep-set eyes betrayed no intention of stifling Vivienne's challenge.

Two little foxes.

Lucas lowered his voice, "You two are rookies in the world of ancient warrior lineages, and this is a direct order from the top brass. You don't have the luxury of refusal."

A palpable sense of authority filled the study. An average person would've crumbled under such pressure, but Vivienne remained composed.

"What if we don't comply? You think you can boss us around with orders? That might work on your own people, but I'm just a regular citizen, not part of your machine. Orders don't mean squat to me!" she retorted with a defiant lean in her chair.

"And besides, with all those ancient warrior lineages and their impressive skills and secret manuals, Mr. Wolf and I are just ordinary folks. This kind of gig? Not really our cup of tea."

Lucas was taken aback. He had only just learned of Vivienne's existence and knew nothing of her personality.

He had mistaken them for pliable kids, only to be surprised by Vivienne's resistance.

Turning to Percival, Lucas remarked, "You're one of us, Percival. The first rule of Vanguard Agency is to follow orders!"

Percival casually touched his nose as he said, "Sorry, Lucas, but I resigned a while back. I'm just a plain citizen of Veridia now." Emphasizing 'plain', Percival's eyes twinkled with mischief.

Lucas felt like exploding with frustration. If it weren't for his status, he would have scolded them directly. What was so 'plain' about them?

One was a world-class hacker with a mother who was the former leader of Vanguard Agency's special ops. The other was the current captain of the same team!

Plain, my foot! The guards outside were more 'plain' than these two! Behind the screen. Arthur's keen eyes narrowed. The thick fabric obscured his view, allowing him only glimpses of the silhouettes.

He couldn't see their faces, but recalling the Percival he had encountered earlier and his current stance, it made him increasingly uneasy.

The young man his father had praised was apparently scared. And that young woman, so young yet so cunning.

To him, serving one's country was the highest honor, and yet she had the gall to refuse. How could Richard Ellington have chosen such a cowardly granddaughter-in-law for them?

Lucas's mood hadn't improved either. He realized that Percival was under Vivienne's thumb.

Deep breaths helped the old man regain his composure. Remembering the orders from above, he said, "Fine, you two foxes. Rest assured, you won't be doing this for nothing."

He pulled a document from the drawer. "The higher-ups have decided to give you full access to the systems during the investigation. With this badge, you can act first and ask questions later, provided there's a valid reason. Local resources and manpower are at your disposal."

Vivienne and Percival shared a knowing glance. Percival took the red-sealed document, skimmed it, and handed it to Vivienne.

Encouraged by their interest, Lucas continued, "All departments will cooperate with your investigation, and you can recruit anyone you trust for your team, regardless of their status—as long as they're not wanted criminals."

Vivienne nodded in approval and said, "Alright then, I'm on board." Percival followed suit, "I've got no objections."

The intricacies of other ancient warrior lineages were unknown to them, but they were certain they had to confront the Abernathy family. With national resources backing them, it made their job much easier than going it alone.

With the deal settled, there was no reason for them to linger. Lucas was eager for them to leave, having been played by these two youngsters.

As they were about to exit the study, Vivienne glanced back at the towering screen embroidered with a tiger descending a mountain, completely hiding the view behind it.

Lucas twitched, irked, "What are you looking at? Get going!" Percival and Vivienne exchanged a look and departed. On the way back, Percival drove while glancing at Vivienne. He asked, "Did you notice something?"

She fiddled with a trinket in the car and said, "Mr. Wolf, don't tell me you didn't feel it."

There was a fourth presence in the room with them and Lucas. Percival's eyebrows rose; he knew Vivienne was sharp. "I didn't at first, but..." he trailed off.

Vivienne concluded, "But when we defied Lucas, that person gave away their presence. If it wasn't intentional, it means our words struck a chord."

But who would be interested in their refusal?

Percival shared her curiosity, but without seeing the person, he couldn't be sure who GASbe ind the cdbert After all, there were many powerful figures above them.

"Let it go, who cares who it was."

Vivienne waved dismissively. "If Lucas trusts him enough to listen in, then he's probably trustworthy. And that's all that matters to

us.

While waiting for the traffic light to turn green, Percival gave Vivienne's hand a gentle squeeze. "You're right. Got any plans for tomorrow?"

Vivienne's fingertips quivered slightly as she turned to look at himSte\was Ws abguty spea@kWhen her phone b Le twice. A message from Dorian popped up.

[Vivienne, this weekend we're hosting a launch for our new perfume line at the house. Make sure you're there.] Vivienne wouldn't dream of declining.

Her fingers danced briefly over the screen, replying with a simple "Okay," before she had a snapepso ansSw civalsrddoston, 'What's up, Mr. olf, trying to ask me out? My time's pretty valuable, you know. Most folks don't get the chance to make an appointment."

Percival's eyes gleamed with mischief. "Then do | have the honor, as your husband, to book a date with my wife?" Vivienne tilted her chin up with playful arrogance. "You certainly may. So, Mr. Wolf, where do you plan on taking me tomorrow?" They hadn't even had a proper honeymoon because of the GTO business! Thinking about it now, she felt they were owed!

With a free hand, Percival playfully poked Vivienne's cheek. "Don't worry, it'll be something you'll love."

Chapter 712

With a rare holiday break, Percival and Vivienne had been tearing it up for a full two days, reveling in the freedom and thrill of the outside world.

Nighttime found no rest for Percival who spent the better part of the darkness sleeping with Vivienne. Even Vivienne, with her robust constitution, was spent.

By the third day, she was sprawled in bed until noon, only rallying in the afternoon to accompany Percival to Kaitlyn's place.

Elsewhere, at a quaint house turned into a private meeting spot.

Victoria sat at the head of the table, her expression dark as storm clouds, "Have we still not found who took Kaitlyn?"

The bodyguard before her bowed his head. "It seems they were cautious. Surveillance along their path has been erased." "Damn it!"

Victoria slammed her fist down hard on the table, "Keep searching! And find out if any other families have taken in new faces

recently! Kaitlyn, where on earth have you vanished to?

Dragging along three useless goons and a daughter, do you really think you can escape the watchful eye of our ancient lineage? The bodyguard remained silent, waiting for Victoria to vent her frustration before stepping forward.

"I've investigated about what you said. No one has reported capturing Kaitlyn, and it doesn't seem like she was taken against her will."

Those from the ancient lineage weren't known for their charity, certainly not to the extent of letting captives pack their belongings. Victoria had considered this possibility.

But what friends could Kaitlyn possibly have in Rivenwood powerful enough to defy the lineage?

Not likely!

Victoria's eyes suddenly widened as Vivienne's unforgettable face flashed through her mind.

After a moment of silence, she commanded, "Look into that woman who fought us that day. I want to see who has the guts to take us on!"

Kaitlyn, you had better be alive! Or else, even as a ghost, I'll drag you back!

At the Littleton Estate.

After leaving her family's home, Vivienne had Matthew handle the transfer of ownership. Now, the house belonged to Kaitlyn. Vivienne was treating Tyler's injuries.

Kaitlyn, watching both her husband's leg and Vivienne, was hesitant to speak.

Under the encouragement of her in-laws, she wanted to say something, but every time she opened her mouth and saw Vivienne's youthful face, she hesitated.

Is this really okay to hand over the legacy that the Littletons had protected for generations to such a young woman? If anything went wrong... She wouldn't know how to live with herself, much less face Vivienne's family.

Vivienne's attention was focused on the silver needles embedded in Tyler's leg, but she didn't miss a single detail of Kaitlyn's behavior.

It was too obvious! Anyone with half a brain could tell Kaitlyn was troubled. But Vivienne stayed quiet, waiting for Kaitlyn to speak up.

When the time came to remove the needles, Vivienne stood up and said, "This medicine, along with the ointment, should be taken internally. It might hurt, but if you can endure three doses, your leg should be nearly healed."

"Thank you, Ms. Hawthorn," Kaitlyn blurted out, overwhelmed with gratitude.

Sadie and Julian, quiet until now, bowed incessantly to Vivienne as they said, "Ms. Hawthorn, we can't thank you enough. Without you, our family... we wouldn't know how we would have survived."

The thought of their recent hardships brought tears to their eyes.

Tyler, most moved of all, wished he could kneel before Vivienne. "Ms. Hawthorn, meeting you has been a blessing. Without your help, my leg and Kaitlyn... we'd still be living in hellish darkness!"

His glance urged Kaitlyn to speak.

Kaitlyn's fingers nervously twisted together as she avoided her husband's gaze.

Their odd behavior didn't escape Vivienne and Percival.

Percival's eyes flickered as he said, "Vivienne, now that we've seen to everyone, let's head out."

Vivienne nodded. "Oh, and Kaitlyn. We're hosting a party in a few days, and I'd like to invite Amelia to join us."

Kaitlyn was flustered. "But, but how can we? Amelia's never been to such an event, and I'm afraid she'll be trouble for you." Vivienne smiled slightly. "It's no trouble at all. It's settled then. I'll come by to pick her up."

She exchanged a knowing glance with Percival and hand in hand, they started to leave the house.

Kaitlyn hesitated, but Anna, who had been following behind Vivienne, leaned in close to Kaitlyn and whispered, "Speak now or forever hold your peace. Miss your chance and there's no going back."

Anna's words struck a chord in Kaitlyn. Jolted into action, she blurted, "Ms. Hawthorn, wait! There's something | need to give you."

Vivienne thought to herself that she should have covered her ears.

Percival commented silently, "Vivienne's new friend has quite the set of lungs. Practicing some kind of roar technique?"

Close by, Anna winced at the volume of Kaitlyn's shout, feeling as though a thousand bees were buzzing in her head. If she had known, she would have kept quiet.

Tyler, Sadie, and Julian looked away, unable to bear the scene. Kaitlyn wasn't this loud usually...

But Kaitlyn, oblivious to their reactions, rushed to Vivienne, clutching her hand. "Ms. Hawthorn, | have something very important to entrust to you."

It seemed like Kaitlyn had made up her mind. She spun on her heel and darted back into her bedroom. In less than two minutes, she reemerged, cradling an antique-looking box that was about the length of her forearm. Vivienne's eyes sparkled with intrigue.

Percival had heard Vivienne speak of the Littletons before, and now, seeing Kaitlyn with the box, he could hazard a guess at what was inside.

Anna, however, was completely in the dark. She hadn't been Weele ola

they'd last rescued KARA, So she es AN of the fact that Kaitlyn was a descendant of an ancient warrior lineage.

"Mrs. Littleton, what's in the box?" Anna asked, eyeing the red satin ribbon wrapped around it with curiosity.

Kaitlyn approached Vivienne, still holding the box. "Ms. Hawthorn, do you remember when I told you that the Abernathy's were after me for a secret recipe?"

She continued, "Actually, there is no secret recipe in the Littleton family. We just have an herb that has properties similar to the elixir of life."

Vivienne's gaze narrowed. The quest for immortality again. Those ancient warriors, how fearful of death were they?

Percival furrowed his brow slightly as he asked, "You mean to say this herb has the same properties as the elixir of life? It can grant immortality?"

That seemed impossible!

Seeing the skepticism in Bevel eyes, Kaitlyn gave a wr Sul there rea wvanrtewakean an grant eterhatlife ? If there were, the Littletons would have been extinct centuries ago!"

She opened the box and said, "This herb was discovered by an a

of the yard tonrfarnii¥By Charice It chit 6 nt anyone eternal life, but it has the power to bring itself back from the dead!"

Chapter 713

Tyler sat in the back, and, seeing the three people looking confused, he couldn't help but feel a little anxious, afraid that his wife wouldn't be able to say it clearly.

"Kaitlyn, let me explain. Ms. Hawthorn, this thing, it's like this. It doesn't matter if you use poison or destroy its roots. All it takes is a drop of its sap, and in less than a day, the herb will grow back to what it is now."

He pointed at the herb that was clearly smothered in a box, but still bright green and fresh, "Not only that. Its sap can also save other, smaller plants about the same size as it."

Vivienne's eyes twinkled with mischief, "But this herb can't cure people, can it?"

Plants and animals, though both forms of life, are fundamentally different from a biological standpoint. This herb may seem miraculous, but if it can't even save a plant slightly bigger than itself, so how could it resurrect the dead or heal broken bones?

Indeed, Kaitlyn nodded in agreement. "It's just an herb, not some kind of elixir from a fairy tale. How could it possibly bring back the dead? Honestly, this thing isn't really about immortality at all."

Vivienne noticed a flash of resentment in Kaitlyn's eyes.

Kaitlyn continued, "But I don't know who spilled the beans about the Littleton family having this herb. Some people believe that since it can revive plants, it must contain the secret to eternal youth. They wanted to take it for research, but it is our family heirloom, the only thing of value the Littleton family has left. My father refused to give it up, and they... they killed my entire family! I'm useless. I couldn't even avenge them!" Kaitlyn's hands trembled as she clutched the box.

Vivienne raised an eyebrow. The Littleton family was murdered? Wasn't it said that Kaitlyn's parents had committed suicide due to a business failure and financial crisis?

Vivienne had yet to investigate the Littleton family's situation thoroughly, only hearing a few versions from others, and had assumed Kaitlyn's parents had taken their own lives.

Seeing Kaitlyn's eyes redden, Vivienne patted her shoulder in a comforting gesture as she said, "Kaitlyn, what do you need me to do for you?"

"This thing is of no use to me." Kaitlyn pushed the box forward. "If it weren't for this, my family wouldn't have been brought to such a tragic end! But my father's dying wish was for me to protect it, and I can't go against his last request!"

But most of all, she didn't want those villains to win!

Anna glanced at the box's contents and asked, "You're not thinking of giving this to Vivienne, are you?" Was this thing really as magical as Kaitlyn claimed?

It looked no different from a common weed.

And yet, having been confined in a box for so long without wilting, it was indeed strange.

To everyone's surprise, Kaitlyn nodded and pushed the box directly in front of Vivienne, "Ms. Hawthorn, I want to give this to you. You're capable, and I believe you can protect this herb well. If not, just burn it!"

Vivienne reached out, tugging at Percival's sleeve, who understood and stepped forward to take the box. "So I should really burn this?"

"Really burn it?" Vivienne's expression didn't seem to be joking.

Kaitlyn's previously valiant spirit seemed to diminish by half. With pleading and reluctant eyes, she occasionally glanced at the box in Vivienne's hands. The pain on her face was clear for anyone to see.

Especially since Vivienne's face showed little emotion.

Tyler prided himself on being an astute judge of character, but even he couldn't tell if she was joking. Worried that Kaitlyn might not be able to let go and suddenly ask for the item back, he almost spoke up. Kaitlyn wouldn't suddenly change her mind, would she?

Sadie and Julian also felt anxious for Kaitlyn, their expressions clear to Vivienne. The longer the time passed, the harder it became for her to suppress her smile.

"This is useless to me. Since you don't want it, Kaitlyn, it's best to burn it to avoid any trouble." To avoid any trouble.

Kaitlyn's eyes flickered and said, "Yes, to avoid any trouble! Better to burn it, so | won't have to live in fear anymore. Keeping it is just a curse."

Her eyes filled with an apology, "Ms. Hawthorn, I'm so sorry. Even though | knew this would bring trouble, | still involved you. Please return it to me, and I'll burn it right now."

She was determined! Her father's last words were not as important as her family's safety!

Kaitlyn reached for the box, but Percival subtly stepped aside, causing her to grasp at air. She teetered, about to fall. Tyler shouted, "Careful!"

Amid the gasps of surprise, Anna quickly steadied her. "Kaitlyn, are you alright?"

Vivienne rushed to Kaitlyn's side, her concern evident, while shooting Percival a dark look.

Percival stiffened.

His Vivienne was becoming more unreasonable by the minute.

It was her idea to tease Kaitlyn, and now she was glaring at him.

Percival chuckled silently, his eyes filled with fondness.

But even if she was unreasonable, he adored her all the more.

The Littleton family couldn't grasp the subtleties of their interaction, but Anna had an inkling.

The struggle to keep from laughing was evident by her twitching lips, indicating she knew Vivienne was only joking.

Not wanting Kaitlyn to catch on too quickly, Anna had been darting her eyes around ever since Vivienne arrived. Caught off guard, she met Percival's tender gaze towards Vivienne.

Such a meltingly warm look made her wonder about Soren. No, why was she thinking about him?

That lazy mutt was still snoozing away, completely oblivious t

world. W atever drearnort e was ldstliraust have been pretty darn captivating to make him forget his own team!

With a shake of her head, Anna refocused on the unfolding drama before her.

In the end, Kaitlyn couldn't tell if Vivienne was spinning tales om spools tyatty wUENat herbal redledy ivienne had been raving about somehow ended up at the YQ Research Center.

"Hey, Vivienne!"

Leopold, with his hair looking like a bird's nest, had finally found refuge in a safe spot. Liftin hig-head.G42aW jenge ard Betbival, with Anna in tow, strolling by. "Percival!" he yelled, but the duo, caught up in their own world, didn't hear a thing. Brody was practically tearing Brian's shirt off. "You lardass! What's your deal with me, huh? My hard-earned research is in ruins because of you!" "Freak! How's that my problem? You're the one who wasn't careful!" Brian shot back, not one to back down easily. With a

wrestler's precision, Brian locked Brody's neck in a firm hold. "You twisted freak, quit pulling at my pants!"

Brody shot back, "Then let me go!"

Chapter 714

Jack and Ethan were both equally matched in strength, and mindful of the fact that they were in Vivienne's lab, both of them hesitated to exert their full force.

But as the scuffle progressed, they got carried away, lost in their own world of grunts and thuds, oblivious to everything else.

Leopold was practically biting his nails off in anxiety. He glanced at Vivienne, who remained silent throughout, and then at Percival, who watched with a mischievous glint in his eye, and couldn't help but mentally pray for Brody.

"Hey, Husky, what's the scoop here? How did these two end up duking it out? And aren't you accompanying Griffin Martinez?" Anna asked with the nonchalance of a spectator at a boxing match.

Leopold bristled at the nickname, "Don't call me 'Husky', Anna! And what do you mean by that? I'm not tethered to the Martinez family. Can't a guy get some fresh air without it being a big deal?"

He huffed, "You want to know so badly? Well, I'm not telling!" Vivienne and Percival gave him a look that could freeze hell over.

Like a scolded pup, Anna could almost hear Leopold's whimpers. "Okay, okay, I'll spill it, Vivienne. I swear on my mother's apple pie, this mess has nothing to do with me!"

"Get to the point," Vivienne demanded, massaging her temples.

Leopold could be such a chatterbox; she'd be old and gray before he finished his story.

Leopold cleared his throat, "Well, the gist is, I was here to pick up some gear. Just as I arrived, I heard Brian arguing with Rex." Turned out, it was nothing serious.

Brian had been tasked by Vivienne to keep an eye on Brody, which meant Brian hadn't been on any missions for a while and was itching for some action. He decided to try his luck with Brody.

"What's up, big guy, feeling idle?" Brody rolled his eyes at the thought of being used as a pawn for Brian's schemes again, especially after last time's debacle with the bonus money.

Brody had finally landed a gig analyzing Karen's artifacts. No way was he about to drop that for Brian's wild goose chase.

Brian wouldn't back down, though. "I'm bored out of my skull, you know. Vivienne asked me to babysit you, make sure you don't get into trouble!"

Brody snorted. With Vivienne's project and his own research at stake, he wasn't going anywhere. But Brian persisted, and somehow their verbal tiff turned physical. "Mr. Wolf, stop gawking. It's embarrassing," Vivienne groaned, wishing she could vanish into thin air.

Percival's deep chuckle was far too soothing for the situation. "Embarrassing? I should record this and post it online. People love a good brawl."

Vivienne thought, "You just love stirring the pot, don't you?"

Percival shrugged, "These young bucks are always vying for your attention. They want to challenge me? They're not even in my league."

Leopold and Anna, having heard the entire story, were too scared to make a sound. Suddenly, a loud slap echoed through the lab!

The hubbub of the lab ground to a halt as everyone's attention shifted from their work to where Brian and Brody stood, frozen, staring in one direction.

"Ms. Hawthorn!" The name rang out, and Leopold noticed Brody and Brian shiver at the mention of Vivienne's name. Percival, subtly poking fun, whispered, "Vivienne?"

He was well aware that his girl was all about the bottom line. This lab was her mother's and her own life's work. And those azure countertops with their beakers and vials held potions worth a fortune.

And now, these two had managed to spill them!

Without a word, Vivienne passed a wooden box to Percival.

"Seems like you two had quite the party in my lab, huh? Do you even know what's inside here?"

She dipped a cotton swab into the spilled potion; the brownish-red liquid instantly stained the swab.

Percival's eyes narrowed, recalling the failed elixirs of immortality they'd found at Samantha's villa. A shiver ran down his spine. "This isn't the sample we brought back from M State, is it?"

With a sheepish grin, Brian chimed in, a chilling sensation creeping up his spine as he nudged Brody, "What the heck is this stuff?"

Brody, with a grim smile, blurted out, "You're toast! Vivienne's going to kill you!"

Brian's eyes widened in horror as Brody accused, "It's all his fault! Ms. Hawthorn, he was the one pestering me for help with some scam, and he's the one who broke the potion!"

Brian's mind raced. Known as the sharpest tool in the Emerald Mountain shed, he retorted, "Vivienne, don't listen to his nonsense! You know me. How could I possibly wreak havoc in your lab? It was just a joke, but he took it seriously."

He blinked innocently, trying to play the fool.

"Who knew Brody here was so gullible? Sorry, Vivienne, but yooean aos pdithOatize the stuff Relies at the corner of the table was important."

Percival coughed awkwardly, wondering just how 'normal' the teaching standards were at Emerald Mountain. Anna cringed, "My eyes, my eyes! How are Vivienne's protégés so... outlandish?" Leopold pulled out his phone, faithfully documenting the entire debacle.

Trying not to tip anyone off, he turned the color of a ripe plum, his shoulders shaking as he typed out a message to his fellow apprentices' group chat.

[Leopold sure knows his way around drama.] Recently, Brian had graduated from an outer disciple to a fully-fledged one, becoming Vivienne's tenth apprentice.

No sooner had Leopold sent the message than he shut off his: RARNE, rubbing his = swplterheheeRs and trying to keep straight face. But he couldn't help it; a snort of laughter escaped him.

His colleagues at the lab were gobsmacked. Was this really happening?

No way!

Vivienne pursed her lips, her hands balling into fists then relaxing.

Then tensing up again.

She couldn't hit him. This was her junior, after all.

Even if he was utterly revolting, she had to win him over with kindness, not force! Damn it!

She couldn't hold back! She had worked so hard to salvage the Tetra from the ruins (sadly) Before she donk avert all her research, it was all surrendered back to Mother Earth!

All thanks to these two numskulls, who seemed to exist solely to make her life difficult!

Chapter 715

Vivienne took several deep breaths before delivering a resounding slap to the back of Brian's head. "Go run laps around the entire institute! And guess what? You've just earned yourself the honor of cleaning duty for the next two months!"

She then turned her attention to Brody who looked as if he'd seen a ghost.

With a swift motion, he sprung to his feet and dashed out, his complexion ashen as he passed his colleagues who could easily spot his pallor.

Brian clambered up from the floor. "What a coward. I mean, Vivienne's stunning. What's there to be afraid of?" His voice wasn't loud, but in the eerie silence of the institute, even an ant's footsteps would have echoed. Everyone, including Leopold, froze for a second, glancing at Vivienne's reaction.

Leopold gulped before venturing, "Is it possible that, uh, they're actually afraid of you?"

Meanwhile, Percival had approached Vivienne's side. "Come on, don't waste your breath here. Let's get out of here."

On the approach to the grand Ellington Mansion. "Are you sure this is where Vivienne lives?" Victoria sat in the car, surveying the distant property.

The scale and setting were on par with the top noble houses, and she'd heard Vivienne was the granddaughter-in-law of the owner of the mansion.

No wonder she'd been so bold the other day.

The bodyguard pointed toward the distant Ellington estate. "That's Ms. Hawthorn's in-laws' place. The road there leads to the bridal suite of Ms. Hawthorn and her husband. This route is a must-pass for them."

Victoria, unsure whether she felt bitter or something else, had initially wanted to step out for a stroll, but her good mood had vanished in an instant.

After what seemed like an eternity of waiting, just as Victoria's patience was wearing thin for the tenth time, another car finally appeared in the distance.

Her interest waned until she lazily asked, "Whose car is that?"

The bodyguard, having already scoped out Percival's ride, squinted for a better look and confirmed it was indeed the Ellington family's car, a rare hint of pleasure crossing his stoic face.

He opened the car door. "Miss, it's Mr. Ellington and Ms. Hawthorn."

"They're here?" Victoria's drowsy mind suddenly snapped to attention. As she stepped out of her car, Percival was already bringing his to a halt.

"It's her." Through the windshield, Vivienne recognized Victoria instantly.

Percival regarded the familiar face and asked, "You know her?"

Vivienne glanced at him and nodded. "She's the Abernathy family's daughter, Victoria—the one I told you about."

As they spoke, Victoria was already by the car. "Ms. Hawthorn, I need a word with you, if you don't mind stepping out." Vivienne rolled down the window and replied indifferently, "If you've got something to say, say it here. We're in a bit of a rush."

"You woman, have you no manners?" Her eyes flicked to Percival, her voice indignant. "For heaven's sake, you're set to be the lady of the Ellington family. Didn't Richard teach you anything about decency?"

Vivienne leaned on the window frame. "And how is that your concern?"

"It's my concern because—my mother is..."

"Ms. Abernathy, we have other matters to attend to."

That was close, Victoria thought, nearly getting lost in Vivienne's words.

Victoria gave the bodyguard Walter a grateful glance. If it weren't for him, she would have been dragged into Vivienne's game.

She steadied herself, about to speak again, when she heard Percival's icy voice, "Ms. Abernathy, if there's nothing else, don't block the way."

"Who said there's nothing else?" Victoria turned to Percival. "Ms. Hawthorn, where have you hidden Kaitlyn?" Vivienne looked at her curiously. "Why should I tell you?"

Victoria was taken aback, then planted her hands on her hips. "Because I am the daughter of the Abernathy family! Don't think I can't touch you just because you're clinging to the Ellingtons. You're nothing more than the daughter of some perfume company CEO. I'm even lowering myself by talking to you!"

With arms crossed and a look of disdain, she warned, "You'd better hand over Kaitlyn quickly! She's nothing but trouble. Do you want to bring disaster upon the Ellington family?"

"Are you questioning the Ellington family's ability to protect someone?" Looking at Victoria's face which bore a striking resemblance to his aunt, Percival's deep eyes filled with a mix of emotions.

There was longing for his aunt and, at the same time, a growing animosity toward the Abernathy family!

Percival's gaze narrowed as Victoria met his intense stare.

Feeling like prey under a hawk's gaze, her skin crawled. "You can't be serious! I'm trying to be helpful here. That woman will bring bad luck to any household she enters!"

"Mr. Wolf, drive." A mysterious glint passed through Vivienne's eyes. She held Victoria's arm and slowly rolled up the window. "Be careful—wear a mask too long, and you might forget how to take it off."

"Damn it! Vivienne, you stop right there!"

Vivienne didn't care about Victoria at all, whose hand was almost crushed!

Clutching her reddened hand, Victoria watched as Percival sped away, leaving her in a cloud of exhaust, too frustrated to speak. "Looks like Kaitlyn's got her wrapped around her finger. Well, that takes the heat off me!"

Muttering under her breath, Victoria slid behind the wheel of her car and cast a lingering glance back at the Englethorpe, a thought suddenly striking her. "Turn around. I know just the person who can handle this."

Vivienne was on the phone, issuing an order, "Get someone to collect a tissue sample from Victoria for analysis."

She hung up just as the bathroom door swung open, and Percival

emerged, steam rising from his body towel and hair and plopped down beside her. "Honestly, no need to check. Victoria's got a look that's a dead ringer for my aunt." Vivienne handed him the hairdryer as she said, "We need to be sure. If she's really your aunt's daughter, then her actions today just got a whole lot more interesting." The hairdryer whirled in the background. Her voice seemed distant to Percival, almost as if it were coming from far away. He paused mid-movement, turning to look at Vivienne, his gaze laced with a meaningful smile. A moment of clarity struck. "Thanks to my clever Vivienne. Without you, I'd be blind with spite, unable to see the bigger picture." Dropping the hairdryer on the nightstand, Percival leaned in close to Vivienne.

Her fragrance, subtle and intoxicating like the scent of fresh cream, filled his senses, and all he had to do was lower his gaze to admire her soft, fair skin.

He nuzzled against her, his nose brushing her skin, feeling a sense of satisfaction he'd never known. His eyes darkened with desire, slowly pooling within.

Vivienne's cheeks flushed pink under his gaze. "They say love makes you lose your wits, Mr. Wolf. Guess you're living proof of that now."

Chapter 716

Vivienne's words were light, but her eyes sparkled with excitement. No matter how many times she had seen it, the sight of Percival's chiseled abs never failed to make her swallow in appreciation.

Her slender, fair fingers traced over his toned muscles, while her other arm wrapped around Percival's neck. "Mr. Wolf, have you put on some weight lately? Your six-pack doesn't feel as rock-hard as before."

Percival thought to himself, "The cheeky little thing, teasing me like that."

He caught her wandering hand in a firm grip, his voice husky, "Don't worry, the real workout starts soon, and I guarantee you'll be more than satisfied."

The Hawthorn Family's Soirée. As arising star in Rivenwood, Dorian had arranged the evening's reception at a modest yet charming boutique hotel. The guest list included business associates and some of the newly acquainted local elite.

"I didn't expect such a turnout tonight. It seems that even a down-and-out camel is still bigger than a horse. I thought the Hawthorn family would never bounce back."

"What's there to be happy about? I wonder what sort of luck this country bumpkin stumbled upon to get cozy with the Ellingtons. If it weren't for that marriage, do you think anyone would give him the time of day?"

"That's why they say Ms. Hawthorn is so cunning. After everything that's happened, Mr. Ellington still stands by her side unwaveringly."

Anna, as Vivienne's bodyguard, heard every insult and slander. "These people!" This was unbearable!

Her eyes glinting with fury, she was about to confront them when Vivienne held her back, "Don't stoop to their level. Hitting them would be too good for them."

Percival stood by Vivienne's side in a tailored suit, his hand resting on her shoulder.

"Thomas, look into their companies. Since they have so much idle time, let's keep them busy." Thomas nodded. "Don't worry, Percival, they won't get off easy."

To mess with the family of Vivienne? They were truly courting death!

"Vivienne!"

Just then, a chorus of excited young voices approached.

Vivienne didn't flinch, instead, she stooped slightly to embrace the children hugging her from either side. "Amelia's here too. You two rascals, make sure you and your friends have a blast today."

Isolde nodded vigorously. "Don't worry, Vivienne! I won't let Thaddeus bully Amelia!"

"That's nonsense!"

Thaddeus stamped his foot and said, "I didn't bully Amelia, right?"

He turned, his gaze falling on Amelia.

The little girl was dressed in a frock that Vivienne had made especially for her, looking timid at her first high-society event. Thaddeus's defensive tone startled her.

Clutching the hem of her dress, Amelia nodded shyly and said, "No. Thaddeus didn't bully me, er, Ms. Hawthorn."

The awkward formality made Vivienne frown slightly.

Before she could speak, Kala, in an elegant cream mermaid gown, approached with a graceful stride, her face beautifully made up under the crystal chandeliers. "Vivienne, when did you arrive? I've been watching the door and didn't even see you."

She linked arms with Vivienne, completely encircling her with the children.

Percival, squeezed out to the side, wore a look of brooding frustration, causing Thomas following behind to lower his head, struggling to suppress a chuckle.

Percival asked, "Something funny?"

Thomas shook his head hastily. "No, it's just that... | was just..." Blast it, why couldn't he control his own smile!

"Percival, | didn't expect to see you here!"

Asoft, melodious voice rang out, and as everyone's attention was momentarily captured by the newcomers, it reverted back to Percival.

Her soft tone made Percival's skin crawl. He dodged the woman lunging at him and said, "Vivienne, | don't know her."

He took his place behind Vivienne, his deep eyes not once glancing at the other woman, instead, looking earnestly at Vivienne. What a drama king.

Since when had Mr. Wolf adopted this style?

Vivienne massaged her temples, remembering when she first met Percival; he was the epitome of cool and arrogant. As time went on, he seemed to become more and more offbeat.

Thomas was like, "No, ma'am, Percival has been like this ever since he started dating you. Haven't you noticed?"

Kala sneaked a glance at Percival, frowning at the interruption. "Ms. Grimshaw, we know you're smitten. But even as a rising starlet, you don't need to throw yourself at every man you see!"

"Let go of me! Do you know who I am?" Ramona Grimshaw struggled against Thomas's grip, fuming, "Who are you to touch me? Percival, don't you remember me? I'm Ramona, I was at your company's annual gala with the VP."

Ramona in a pink mini-dress saw Percival and her demeanor changed instantly, "You even gave me directions there." Vivienne's cold gaze shifted to Percival.

Without hesitation, she met his affectionate look

"I don't remember her. Thomas, throw her out."

"Right away!" Thomas effortlessly lifted her, heading towards the door.

Ramona's hand clutched at his wrist, about to make a move. In that moment, a gaze as sharp as a sword pinned her in place.

Ramona froze, holding back the urge to look away. Her mouth opened and closed, protesting, "Let me go! I am the new brand ambassador of the Hawthorn Group, you can't treat me like this!"

The new brand ambassador of the Hawthorn Group?

Vivienne's eyes flickered with a glint of surprise as she turned to face Kala. "I remember my dad only signed you as the brand ambassador. Who is she supposed to be?"

Kala's expression was tainted with distaste, "Didn't your father tell é Ramona is the ney derlifg the ifuastais afd pushing. In just three months, she went from a complete nobody to the hottest sensation in town."

Nobody seemed to know what Ramona did before her meteoric rise. Kala had tried to dig up some dirt on her but found that Ramona's past was squeaky clean, which was unnerving.

Her ascent was alarmingly rapid, and within a few months, she had mM become a ogee bore @dd tht amona had been shoehorned into the Hawthorn family endorsement deal by the higher-ups.

Vivienne was clueless about all this.

At that moment, Dorian had noticed the commotion and hurried over. He was struck by the sight of Ramona, being restrained by Thomas.

"Thomas, what on earth are you doing? Please let Ms. Grimshaw go." Thomas remained still, his questioning gaze shifting to Percival. With a slight nod from the man, Thomas finally eased his grip.

Ramona shrugged off his hold and dashed towards Dorian, "Mr. Hawthorn, is this none treat yout sole: ues u're anything special just because your daughter hitched her wagon to the Ellingtons. A country bumpkin like you trying to compete with me? Please!"

Chapter 717

"Country bumpkin?" Vivienne arched an eyebrow, an expression that hadn't crossed her face in quite some time.

She surveyed Ramona with a critical eye, noting the girl couldn't be more than twenty. With her doll-like features, it was no wonder she had become an overnight sensation.

It wasn't just the push from her handlers behind the scenes; that pretty face was surely a factor.

Withdrawing her gaze, Vivienne's clear eyes shifted to Dorian. "Dorian, what's going on? Didn't we agree that Kala was to be the face of the new perfume line?"

She paused, noting Dorian's evasive look. She asked, "You're in trouble, why didn't you talk to me?"

"I will explain everything later, Vivienne," Dorian replied, his face showing distress. "Ms. Grimshaw, this is my daughter. Please be respectful."

After he spoke, he turned to face Ramona with a stern expression. Something was off.

Vivienne tugged at Percival's sleeve, and without a word, he understood. He gestured to Thomas, indicating he should lean in closer.

Ramona, meanwhile, was visibly irked by Percival's blatant disregard for her, his attention solely on Vivienne.

Her voice dripped with jealousy, "Percival, darling, look at them! I wouldn't have taken this ad gig if it wasn't for your sake. Now, they're all ganging up on me."

Her whiny voice grated on Vivienne's nerves.

Vivienne's elegant eyebrows knitted together as she scoffed, "Ms. Grimshaw, are you supposed to be some kind of mother hen? Clucking away like you're laying eggs at the Hawthorn family talent show."

Ramona's anger flared, and she pointed at Vivienne. "You, you country bumpkin! What right do you have to talk to me?" Ramona's shrill voice drew the attention of the entire banquet hall to the unfolding scene between Vivienne, Dorian, and Percival. The guests murmured among themselves, their expressions shifting.

"What's going on here? Who's calling Ms. Hawthorn a country bumpkin?"

"Get with the times. Ms. Hawthorn is known as the perfume maestro Q, not to mention a renowned fashion designer. How can she be unaware?"

"If someone as accomplished as Ms. Hawthorn is being called a country bumpkin, what does that make the rest of us?"

The surrounding chatter didn't escape the group, and Anna chimed in with a smirk, "All this talk of country bumpkins. One would think Ms. Grimshaw was some kind of high-born lady."

"You, IX"

If it weren't for the restrictions of the setting, Ramona would have slapped Vivienne then and there. Her face flushed with a mix of rage and mortification; she regretted not studying Vivienne's background more thoroughly.

Who would have thought that this woman, once so easily bullied in Havenwood, held so many prestigious titles unknown to her?

Ramona clenched her teeth in frustration as she said, "You just wait! I won't let you get away with this!"

Meanwhile, in a dimly lit hospital room, Willa had just finished bathing Karen and was carrying the basin to the bathroom. The darkness outside was so thick you could slice it, making it impossible to discern if anyone was lurking below. Suddenly, the lights in the bathroom flickered twice, then went out.

Willa, her eyes sharp, kicked open the bathroom door to find nothing but darkness. Without hesitation, she followed the rope that someone had used to climb in through the window.

Just then, the hospital room door cracked open, letting in a sliver of light. Aman cautiously stepped in, making sure Karen was the only other person there before advancing with a syringe aimed at her exposed skin.

But before the needle could make contact, the room flooded with light, and Willa, with lightning-fast reflexes, threw a dagger that pinned the intruder's head to the wall.

Back at the party, the minor disturbance did little to dampen the festivities.

Kala stuck close to Vivienne, casting glances around the room. "Strange, where did Ramona go? She wouldn't just leave like that, would she?"

Vivienne turned her head with a light-hearted tone, "Why? Were you hoping she'd stay?"

Even joking, her demeanor was cool and detached.

Kala, mistaking Vivienne's lightheartedness for irritation, hurriedly explained, "No, no. I wish she'd leave faster. But you don't understand, Vivienne. Ramona is not as simple as you think."

Remembering the fates of those who had crossed Ramona recently, Kala shivered. "The way she stared at her sights on

r. Ellington. There must have been some incident; otherwise, she would never let things slide."

"If I'm not mistaken, that woman—whatever her name was—she knows some skills," Percival said coolly, recalling the marks he had spotted on Ramona's wrist.

Vivienne glanced at him. "Mr. Wolf, quite observant, aren't we?"

Percival offered a helpless smile, his ice-cold eyes softening for a moment. "And you accuse me of being jealous. Seems like you're the jealous one."

He gently ruffled Vivienne's soft hair, his eyes glowing with an unspoken warmth.

Kala stood there, her heart fluttering uncontrollably already when at

was near Vivienne, who was sitting in her car as it began to grow louder by the second. She worried, what if Vivienne noticed?

Anna, caught off guard, had just been force-fed another spoonful of PDA, and she felt numb from the ground everywhere — to the sky, to the ground — anywhere but towards the lovebirds enveloped in their own pink bubble.

In the shadows!

Ramona, like a viper eyeing its prey, watched the sickeningly sweet couple. Her hand, hanging by her side, clenched into a fist. Vivienne, just you wait. Once I snag Percival for myself, you would get your comeuppance!

"Ramona! Are you even listening to me?" The sudden roar from her earpiece snapped Ramona back to reality.

With an irritated touch to her earring, she replied, "Yeah, yeah, I heard you. I slipped up this time, but I've got it under control. I don't need you lecturing me!"

Feeling eyes on her, Vivienne's red lips curved into a sly smile. Oh, Ramona.

She would remember this!

Chapter 718

The following day, Vivienne was still curled up in Percival's arms, sleeping like a log.

Trending topics about her were skyrocketing, with a mix of comments from fans and possibly paid trolls sprawling below the headlines.

[Hawthorn Family Heiress Rampage]

[Vivienne Bullying]

A uniform wave of negative press.

[Who is this Vivienne? Never heard of her. How dare she mess with our sweet Ramona?]

[Poor Ramona, what is her team doing? They set her up with this no-name brand, and she gets harassed at the party!] [Hawthorn family perfume? Our Ramona was doing them a favor representing them, and this is how they repay her!] Vivienne was jolted awake by the insistent ringing of her phone.

Willa's voice came through, and Vivienne muffled by sleep, "What's up, Aunt Willa?"

"Vivienne, come to the hospital. Someone broke in last night."

Vivienne and Percival rushed to the hospital in record time. In the ward, Willa was already seated by Karen's bedside waiting for them.

Vivienne, usually composed, looked unusually serious. Without waiting for Willa to speak, she asked, "What happened?" Percival followed closely behind her. "What's that in your hand?"

He had remained calm, the first to notice the syringe Willa was holding. In the shaft of morning sunlight, the clear liquid in the white syringe shimmered with a warm glow.

Willa didn't answer right away but glanced at Karen, who looked as peaceful as if she were merely asleep. "I can tell their target was specific. They weren't trying to kill your mother; they wanted her to test some drug."

"Testing drugs?" Vivienne's gaze finally fixed on the potion in the syringe, "But why involve my mother?" Willa shook her head and handed the syringe to Vivienne, her ignorance evident.

Considering the skill of the attacker from the night before, she asked, "Vivienne, how much do you know about the ancient warrior lineage?"

At that, Vivienne paused, "Apart from the Perez and Martinez families, there's the Littleton and Abernathy families." As she listed the few families she had some knowledge of, she turned to Percival, "Mr. Wolf, what do you know?"

Percival's eyes darkened as he shook his head slowly. "I only knew of the ancient warrior lineage through the Abernathy family, nothing more than you've mentioned."

These families had centuries-old legacies, many secrets unknown even to insiders like Vance.

The surface-level information was scant; without these individuals revealing themselves, they might as well be any ordinary person.

Vivienne understood that Willa wouldn't bring this up without reason. She inspected the syringe in her hand and then said, "Aunt Willa, are you suggesting that the attack on my mother is related to the ancient warrior lineage?"

"Exactly," Willa nodded. "I've spent years tracking down the F-Poison, but I've also learned a lot about the ancient warrior lineage."

"Let's not waste time on the lesser-known families. At the pinnacle of their sphere, there are five major families!" Of course, including the Sheldons would make it six.

Each family's martial skills and abilities differed.

Besides the Perez, Martinez, and Abernathy families, there remained the Grimshaw and Boyd families!

"I don't know if any of them are in cahoots with F-Poison," Willa continued, pulling out a humanoid figure from under the bed, "but whoever uses androids like this is GTO. They're likely tied up in all this somehow."

Thomas and Leopold, following Vivienne and Percival, nearly jumped out of their skins at Willa's nonchalant reveal.

Leopold thought to himself, 'Scared the daylights out of me. Vivienne's aunt is as fierce as she is—does she really think she can just whip out something like this without warning?'

Thomas had to agree. Willa was tough as nails!

Anna remained unfazed by the android, although she did distance herself from the two men, scrutinizing the hole in its head.

"Hold on," Vivienne suddenly crouched down, "Is this Huxley Boyd?"

Meanwhile, in a secluded upstairs room of an upscale room.

Arthur sat at the head of the table, his aura of authority making everyone else sweat bullets. Despite their innocence, they couldn't shake a feeling of guilt under his gaze.

Arthur's slender, finely jointed fingers tapped on the documents before him, the sound like the tolling of a death knell. "After checking for so long, are these all you got?"

The man closest to Arthur nearly buried his head in his chest as he said, "War God, this i allave uh antheRoaks FAY. We've turned the Brooks family upside down, including their servants from that year; we haven't found the person you're looking for."

Arthur was far from content with the conclusion. "Are you telling me that a person just vanished into thin air from the Brooks estate?" he questioned with a mixture of incredulity and irritation in his voice.

The man seated across from him shifted uncomfortably in his chair before hesitantly speaking UP, (

it's not ex ctv thax ts Jost that Adee named Winnie associated with the Brooks family. We've checked - the main family, the servants, even the guests who've passed through. No one by that name exists."

Arthur's brow furrowed deeply, a storm brewing on his face. He should have known better than to delegate this. He should have looked into it himself, but his duties had been pressing at the time, leaving him no room to investigate.

He sat motionless in his chair, fingers tapping slowly on the desktop, the atmosphere heavy with tension.

The man opposite Arthur swallowed hard, breaking the silence. "War God, we might not have found anyone named Winnie, but... | did come across someone named Karen."

Arthur's tapping fingers paused, and he arched an eyebrow, signaling for the man to continue.

"Karen was Scott's fiancée. They were set to marry, but she vanished the day before the wedding. She later married a Dorian from Haverorth feryicyani tied & daughter Rumor has it that she was already pregnant with this daughter when she left Scott. Karen passed away, somehow came back to life, and was spotted at Vanguard Agency not long ago. And then, she just disappeared without a trace."

The man paused, then seemed to remember an important detail. "Oh, and Karen's daughter? Her name is Vivienne Hawthorn."

Chapter 719

The situation surrounding Karen was combed through once again, but the leads were scant. All they knew was that she used to be the captain at Vanguard Agency and later fell in love with a man named Scott. As for why she vanished off the face of the earth, well, since Timothy Brooks was now the head of the Brooks family, and despite employing every trick in the book, they couldn't pry a word out of his tight-lipped kin.

Arthur, after all, was the War God, and they couldn't resort to extraordinary measures to coerce confessions, either. So, that was the extent of what he could dig up.

Arthur's gaze sharpened. "Vivienne is Karen's daughter?"

That was news to him.

He knew Karen was a trusted subordinate of his father's, a formidable agent at Vanguard Agency, but he had never actually met her.

As for Karen's affair with Scott, he had his suspicions that Karen was, in fact, Winnie. He even confronted Scott about it, but the man was stubborn as a mule and didn't spill the beans.

But now, he was pretty sure Karen wasn't Winnie.

Winnie was a wise and astute woman. Even if she had a daughter, she wouldn't raise her to be the arrogant, high-and-mighty type like Vivienne.

"Knock, knock!" Arhythmic knocking sound suddenly filled the air. Arthur's brow furrowed, and with a slight gesture of his hand, his subordinates stood up as if they were granted a pardon.

His voice was ice as he commanded, "Keep searching! Dig up the streets if you have to, but find her. I want her alive or evidence of her passing!"

He refused to believe that someone could just vanish into thin air.

When Victoria entered the room, only Arthur remained.

She left Walter at the door and stepped inside, halting ten feet away from Arthur, "War God, I lost Kaitlyn!" Arthur's dark eyes lifted, heavy as lead. "What happened?"

Trying to maintain her composure, Victoria avoided his gaze. "It's all because of that Vivienne. She seems to be chummy with Kaitlyn. With Percival backing her, who knows where she's hidden her? My people are scouring the city, but so far, zilch!"

"Vivienne again." Hearing that name once more, Arthur's expression tightened. Victoria stiffened slightly. "You know her?"

Arthur scoffed, "A cowardly little upstart is all. Continue the search and try not to ruffle Percival's feathers. Your mother's illness can't wait forever."

In a charming, old-world elegance in Northway City. Samantha lay in her white sundress on the ornate four-poster bed in the master bedroom.

It seemed she had slept for an eternity. Slowly, she opened her eyes, rubbed the ache in her temple, and looked out at the lush garden, "I never took you for a romantic."

Her long, fair legs teasingly swung over to the man seated by the bed. Her toes trailed up his pants and came to rest on his tense thigh. "Is this another one of your hideaways?"

The statue-like man stirred. "No."

Even with Samantha's seduction, those unfathomable eyes betrayed no emotion, "You just woke up. Don't waste your energy on frivolities."

"Don't be so heartless." Samantha bent her legs, sitting up on her knees.

The movement caused her fullness to bounce enticingly, drawing the eye. "I've been asleep so long, don't you miss me at all? If you pass up today, once I'm back in the lab, you'll lose this chance forever."

The man's Adam's apple bobbed, his gaze meeting Samantha's sultry eyes.

His hand, as if bewitched, glided over Samantha's smooth shoulder. Their distance closed, lips nearly touching when a woman's voice from outside chilled the air, "If you're planning a tryst, it'll have to wait."

Her tone was melodious, but to others, it sounded icy cold. "Come out; I need to talk to you."

At the Boyd household.

Mara had been unusually docile lately. She shadowed Cecilia, rarely leaving her side. Alongside her brother Huxley, they were like two quails in the Ellington household.

Cecilia's mood dictated their unease. When Vivienne arrived, Mara's face turned ashen. "What do you want?" Her trembling finger pointed at Vivienne, her eyes darting to Percival, then to the person slung over Leopold's shoulder.

Leopold rolled his eyes, "Since when does Vivienne need to report to you when she comes home? She's the future lady of this house; what does it have to do with you?"

"Step aside, let us in. This kid is as heavy as a rock!"

Synthetic humans were designed with realistic weight, and Leopold, having carried the burden all the way, was overheated and short-tempered.

Mara's face flashed with resentment, meeting Vivienne's mocking gaze, and a shiver ran down her spine. "I didn't mean. Vivienne, please come in. Aunt Cecilia was asking about you just yesterday."

As if she was the true matriarch of the home. Mara's cautious demeanor was tinged with a hint of superiority. Vivienne raised an eyebrow, indifferent to her antics.

Leopold, on the other hand, couldn't stand Mara's pretentiousness. He

strode past her, carrying her to the study for your trouble. O

the unknowing eye, one might mistake you for an extra maid in the Ellington family. Right, Percival?"

Percival didn't respond. In truth, he didn't have the chance.

The body Leopold had been carrying was placed on the couch, and if not for the gaping hole in its head, anyone would believe it was the real Huxley.

Even Mara, his own flesh and blood, leaped back like a startled alley cat at the sight of "him." "Huxley, what on earth happened to you?"

She lunged forward, her eyes blazing with fury as she locked onto Vivienne. "Vivienne! You jerk, if you've

problem ake it Witlme. My

roth asec nothing to you. Why would you hurt him? | swear, Aunt Cecilia's gonna hear about this. You wicked witch, you don't deserve to set foot in the Ellington family home!"

Leopold kicked out in frustration. "Would you shut it? Open your eyes, for God's sake! Does that look like Huxley to you?"

Mara retorted, "How can it not be Huxley?! Mr. Sterling, even if you're siding with Vivienne, you can't just stand there and lie to my face. You think | can't recognize my own brother?"

Clutching "Huxley" tightly, Mara's voice was raw with emotion.

Her cries were so loud they even stirred Cecilia from her apartment upstairs. Wrapped in a shawl, she hurried down. When she caught sight of Vivienne standing below, her eyes lit up.

Before she could approach, a figure burst forth like a firecracker, "Au Cecilia, you've atte akemieidel | Know aid Messed up in the past. | know Vivienne doesn't like me, but no matter what, she can't take it out on Huxley."

Vivienne was at her wit's end, "How could your cousin Mara be so blind? How could she not see what was right in front of her?"

Percival's usually stoic face softened just a bit, "Her brains never did work quite right."

Chapter 720

Percival and Vivienne communicated through their eyes, unaware of the world around them. It was as if singletons Thomas and Leopold didn't exist.

Listening to Mara's tearful saga, Cecilia's face was a portrait of utter confusion. "What do you mean Vivienne killed Huxley?"

She pushed Mara away. "Are you out of your mind? If Vivienne really wanted Huxley dead, why would she bring him back in broad daylight for all to see? She could've just left him to rot in M State, couldn't she?"

Mara was choked up, disbelieving. "But I saw Huxley there..."

Cecilia rolled her eyes. "Are you sure it was Huxley? I saw the guy sprinting out of here not half an hour ago. You're not suggesting that in the past thirty minutes, Vivienne murdered him and then paraded his body just to show off? What do you think she is, brainless like you?"

After a verbal barrage that left Mara speechless, it became clear that Cecilia, who was typically distant and cold to her, had surprisingly come to the defense.

Onlookers Vivienne and Percival, accustomed to Cecilia's clean but sharp tongue, were the first to react. "Thomas, Leopold, lock down the city and find Huxley!"

Vivienne, not one to sit idle, texted Draven; [Draven, take a team and scour the city for Huxley. If you find him, bring him to Ellington Manor.]

It seemed that the heavens were conspiring to keep Vivienne busy. Just when she thought she could enjoy a couple of days of freedom, trouble was brewing anew.

Clueless about their plan but sensing urgency in Vivienne's demeanor, Cecilia asked, "What's up? Has Huxley done something stupid again?"

Thomas couldn't help but comment, "That 'again' is spot on."

Vivienne patted Cecilia on the shoulder. "Someone sent a synthetic replica of Huxley to the hospital, aiming to harm my mother. Today, we're going to flush out the mastermind behind this."

Percival chimed in, "Mom, has Huxley been acting strange lately?" "What are you implying?!"

Mara, who had been eavesdropping from the staircase, inwardly cursed Huxley's failure to eliminate Karen, depriving Vivienne of experiencing the same grief.

As they voiced their suspicions about Huxley, Mara stood up defiantly. "You suspect Huxley of wanting to harm your mother?"

She grasped Vivienne's hand. "Vivienne, could you be mistaken? Huxley's as timid as a mouse; how could he possibly harm your mother? Plus, with the medicine you gave me still in my system, he wouldn't dare, not even for my sake."

Percival raised an eyebrow, deftly pulling Vivienne's hand away from Mara's grip. "We can't be sure about that." "What?" Mara was bewildered.

Vivienne leaned into Percival's embrace. "Ms. Boyd, don't overestimate your importance. Your life might not mean much to him. Otherwise, how would you explain the synthetic replica?"

Mara's expression shifted slightly. "This has to be a setup! Vivienne, you're too smart not to see through such a ruse." She couldn't let them conclude that Huxley was the murderer. If they did, her days within the Ellington family would be numbered. "Really?" Vivienne asked provocatively. "Ms. Boyd, so sure of yourself, do you have evidence?"

Percival's gaze was icy. "Vivienne doesn't need your input in her affairs."

In a shadowy, unnamed corner of the city, Huxley was frantically yelling into the phone. "They've captured the synthetic! What's the deal with your operation? Why did Willa come back early?"

Whatever the person on the other end said, it was met with a cold laugh from Huxley. "Easy for you to say! Vivienne's no fool; she won't be deceived by me."

The woman's voice, seductive and chilling, reassured him, "Don't worry, I have faith in you. If not in yourself, at least believe in what's inside you, right?"

The call ended abruptly, and Huxley, snapping out of his frenzied state, felt a surge of anger.

Damn it all!

In the end, they refused to help him!

So much for the Grimshaw family; they couldn't even handle Vivienne's aunt, Willa. Some power players they were!

If only he hadn't trusted that woman and her empty promises!

What now?

That was Vivienne's mother, and that woman had more tricks up her sleeve than a Vegas magician. What would she do to him?

At that moment, Huxley was acutely aware that he had sent a synthetic replica in his stead. Remembering the footage he saw on the security feed, he felt a chill run down his spine. If one of those throwing knives had found him, he wouldn't have had a chance to plead his innocence.

Plead? Aglint of cunning flashed in Huxley's eyes as panic gave way to a sinister calm.

He took a deep breath, fists clenching, and then relaxed. "It's just Vivienne, isn't it? Well, you just wait. The Boyd family will have its revenge."

On the set, Kala's sunny disposition darkened as she read through the online comments.

"Have you spoken to your boss about this?" she asked her agent, knowing Vivienne was tied up with other matters and had assigned someone else to handle her affairs.

The man's influence in the entertainment industry was significant, and even though this involved Vivienne, he trod lightly, "We've been unable to reach the boss; she's preoccupied."

As they spoke, a call from Darren came through. Kala didn't hesitate to answer. "Did you find Ramona's location?"

Darren's voice was laced with exhaustion as if he'd been through the wringer, yet there was a hint of excitement. "Got it. I'll send you the address. Let's go together!"

"Vivienne's probably tied up right now. She's done so much for us; it's time we did something for her." "And what exactly do you plan to do for her?" As Kala's words hung in the air, Ramona's voice followed closely behind.

The RV fell into an abrupt silence as Kala hung up the phone, her brows knitting together in frustration. "Ramona Grimshaw, I've been looking for you. Imagine my surprise when you waltz right in!"

She swiped away from the call screen and scrolled down her Twitter feed. "This trending topic, did you see this? Fe ke a street pePto er dancing in front of a widow's house, calling attention to yourself! Do you really think, with these petty tricks, you can steal Percival away from Vivienne? Dream on!"

Ramona's face shifted with emotion. "Whether I'm dreaming or not is none of your concern, Ms. Brooks. Honestly, I can't fathom why you'd be so friendly with her. The Brooks family has been dragged through the mud by that wench, Vivienne, and yet here you are, acting all buddy-buddy. That's right. After all, Vivienne is your boss. Without her, you'd probably be on the chopping block by now."

She tilted her chin up, her expression dripping with sarcasm. "Let's face it, you're nothing but a yes who ever finds you a boyfriend. Why

don't you come with me instead? I guarantee not only will I make you a star, but I'll also help the Brooks family get their revenge."

Kala's face turned as cold as ice. "The sun hasn't even set, and here's Ms. Grimshaw, daydreaming away. I've never seen someone so proud to be a prostitute like you. But, I'm sorry to burst your bubble; I don't share your fetish."

She cocked her head to one side, tapping on the table. "You better take care of yourself, Ms. Grimshaw. And keep your distance from Percival. Not everyone has a taste for your kind of woman!"