

## Million-Dollar 721

### Chapter 721

In the buzzing world of the entertainment industry, rumors had long swirled that Ramona's meteoric rise to stardom wasn't without the help of some shady dealings. But Kala, with her own history as a fan favorite, never bought into the gossip. She knew all too well how vicious whispers could trail a successful woman.

However, when she overheard Ramona trash-talking Vivienne, the scion of a respected entertainment dynasty, her blood boiled. Kala's patience snapped as Ramona's sneering remarks about the Brooks family hit too close to home. Before she knew it, a sharp retort lashed out from her lips.

Ramona's face cycled through a spectrum of anger, embarrassment, and indignation.

Kala, her own temper flaring, nearly apologized, but the words froze on her tongue as she stared into Ramona's twisted expression of fury.

"Oh, you've really done it now, Kala!" Ramona seethed, her delicate features contorting. No wonder Kala and Vivienne were buddies—birds of a feather flock together!

"You want to slander me? You're going to pay for that!" Ramona yelled inside when her hand shot out, grabbing Kala's wrist and attempting to hurl her down the trailer steps.

"Ramona!" The urgency in her agent's voice was clear as he raced to intervene.

With the grace of an actress, Ramona turned on the waterworks for the gathering crowd. "Ms. Brooks, I know you resent me for snagging that endorsement from you, but we all have to play the game in this industry. How could you attack me like this?"

Kala was incredulous at the audacity of Ramona's performance, almost impressed despite herself. The emotions in her eyes flickered as she stared at Ramona.

The shooting had just ended, and several staff were walking around the set, ready to leave. Hearing the commotion and realizing it was a clash between two popular actresses, a crowd quickly formed with onlookers recording the whole thing.

Ramona's agent, Jackson, helped her up, and she limped onto him as if her ankle was sprained.

Understanding the look in her eyes, Jackson immediately said righteously, "Ms. Brooks, Ramona has been giving you the utmost respect because you're a senior in this industry; that's why she prefers to avoid conflicts with you even if it means she has to give up things in the process! And how do you repay her? Not only did you take Ms. Vivienne's side in oppressing us during the banquet, but now you've even gone and pushed her down the stairs! You know, even if you want to suck up to Ms. Vivienne, this is too much! Everyone knows you're doing this for the endorsement! You know what? We don't want it anymore! Take the endorsement!"

Noticing a gathering crowd, with some even livestreaming the situation, Jackson added, "But this isn't over! Ms. Brooks, we'll see you in court for intentional assault!"

Ramona suddenly cut in with a gentle and soft tone, "No, Jackson. Don't say that. Ms. Brooks didn't mean it. It was my fault for stepping up and not expecting the Hawthorn family to actually hire me for this endorsement. Ms. Brooks, don't you worry, I'll call Mr. Hawthorn right now! I'll make sure you get what you want."

The onlookers started murmuring. "That's horrible! To think | actually believed Kala was a nice person!" "How nice can the granddaughter of a murderer be? She's showing her true colors now, isn't she?"

"Opportunities in the entertainment industry are never certain until the last moment. How can Kala be so shameless to claim that the endorsement belongs to her?"

"If she becomes the brand ambassador of the Hawthorn Group, I'll never buy their perfumes again! Who knows what ingredients they put inside? They might be lethal for all we know!"

Hearing those discussions, Kala's agent, Xavier, frowned, his sharp gaze scanning past Ramona's ankle, and was surprised.

This woman actually deliberately sprained her ankle for real. How could a girl born with a silver spoon have the courage to do something like that?

"You done?" Kala surveyed the surroundings, the dazzling flashlights making it hard to keep her eyes open. She would be a fool to still not have grasped the situation by now.

Clearly, Ramona's goal today was to ruin her reputation. It was no wonder Ramona kept provoking her.

However, how did Ramona know about the Brooks family? Didn't Vivienne prevent the information from leaking? The public thought the Brooks family's demise was because of her grandmother. In fact, even Scott was not considered the main culprit by the public.

Yet, why did Ramona sound like she knew the truth?

With these thoughts in mind, Kala tried to extract more out of Ramona. "Ms. Grimshaw, you seem to be very familiar with my family, so I'm sure you know that Vivienne is my cousin. You say you snatched my endorsement, right? How about we call Vivienne now to see if that's actually the case?"

She smirked and added, "Or, Ms. Grimshaw, do you think you've charmed her into betraying her own family?" Suddenly, it dawned on the crowd as well.

"Oh, right, I've forgotten about that. I think I've heard somewhere that Kala is Ms. Vivienne's older cousin."

"What? That's impossible! Ms. Vivienne comes from Havenwood! Kala is a Rivenwood local through and through. How could they be related?"

"The Hawthorn and the Brooks families share the same ancestors. Plus, I heard Ms. Vivienne's biological father isn't actually from the Hawthorn family but the imprisoned head of the Brooks family, Scott Brooks."

"You know, that reminds me of something. I've read online that Vivienne bullied Ramona's sorority sister into thinking the Hawthorn family will let someone who has bad blood with their lady of the house be their brand ambassador, right?"

Hearing the heated speculations, Ramona was completely unfazed. "Ms. Brooks, you've fallen in love with Ms. Vivienne's husband. Don't you think that reason is more than sufficient for her to fire you?"

Kala stood her ground, her eyes widening in shock. Her feelings were like a secret garden, meticulously tended and hidden behind high walls. So, how on earth did Ramona uncover the truth?

It was baffling. Even Vivienne, with her eagle eye for detail, hadn't picked up on the fact that she had fallen for Percival. "You..." Kala's lips parted as she scrambled for words to counter. But Ramona's gaze was unwavering, a deep pool of certainty that silenced Kala's protests before they could even begin.

Ramona let out a derisive laugh, "Kala, Ms. Vivienne has been so kind to you. Without her, would you ever have made your comeback? And to think, you've fallen for her husband."

She dabbed at her eyes with a touch of theatrics and continued, "I wouldn't have known a thing if Ms. Vivienne hadn't confided in S

hese today. do Sek it to you. She can't bear to see you anymore, Kala. And I'm telling you all this for your own good. I don't blame you if you don't believe me. Direct your anger at me if you must. I'm just the messenger, powerless and at your mercy."

Ramona was beautiful in a way that was different from Kala's radiant charm. Her beauty was the kind that made everyone believe she could harbor no ill intentions. A veritable angel in appearance but with the heart of a viper!

With her tearful plea, she had everyone around feeling a pang of sympathy for her plight.

## Chapter 722

When the director of the production arrived on set, he stumbled upon a rather intense scene. Kala stood defiantly atop her trailer, her agent standing behind her, expression as frosty as a winter morning in Maine.

Across from them, Ramona and her own agent were the picture of distress—one looking pitiful, the other seething with silent rage—a stark contrast to Kala's imposing stance.

At first glance, it looked like Kala was throwing her weight around, taking out her frustration on Ramona since she couldn't confront Vivienne directly.

"Ramona!" Kala's smartphone buzzed incessantly in the palm of her hand.

She knew Darren was on the other end, furiously texting after overhearing Ramona's comments. Kala was at a loss for how to respond.

Her eyes locked onto Ramona with fury, "Don't spew nonsense! It's clear as day you were the one trying to seduce Percival, and it backfired spectacularly. Now you have the gall to play the victim and accuse Vivienne? You're despicable!"

Kala's agent, a longtime friend of Vivienne's, furrowed her brow so tightly it could crush a fly. "Ms. Grimshaw, slander is a serious offense. You're blatantly trying to stir trouble. Do you think we're all fools?"

Ramona wore an innocent facade, "Kala, if you don't believe me, call Ms. Vivienne right now. If she doesn't despise you, she'll certainly take your call."

"That wretched woman, she must know the boss is unreachable right now! She's doing this on purpose!" Darren bellowed over the phone.

Kala exchanged a knowing look with her agent, their eyes scanning the crowd. The entertainment industry thrived on gossip, and now, with Kala's trailer as the epicenter, a crowd had gathered.

Especially since today was fan visitation day on set, and behind the banners, some were even hoisting cameras, trying to catch a glimpse of the drama.

Ramona had to have known! She chose today of all days to stir up trouble. What was she playing at?

"Kala, snap out of it. If you truly have no interest in Vivienne's husband, call her now to clear the air."  
Suddenly, from within the crowd, someone shouted.

It was like a drop of water in a frying pan—sizzling and chaotic!

The murmuring crowd erupted, and a nosy onlooker shouted with cupped hands, "Yeah, Kala! Just make the call. You're loaded; the call won't break the bank!"

"Kala, if you don't call, are you admitting guilt?"

"How low can you go? Ms. Vivienne was so good to you, and here you are, coveting her man. Just like your murderous grandmother, utterly repulsive!"

"Genetics really do run deep! How can someone like you be so adored?"

"I've been dying to say this! Kala's acting is subpar, and she's such a diva. Was Ms. Vivienne blind to promote her?"

Some crew members recognized the director and grabbed his arm, "Director, how can someone like her be our lead actress?" "Exactly, Director. Kick her out!"

"Kick her out!"

Amid the uproar, no one noticed the fleeting gleam in Ramona's eyes.

Kala looked down at the frenzied crowd, far from panicked. She was no stranger to the fair-weather nature of showbiz folks. At this point, there was nothing left to scare her.

But this couldn't go on! Her career was finally taking off with Vivienne's support! She couldn't let this absurd woman, Ramona, succeed!

"Can't reach Vivienne still?" Her only recourse now was to call Vivienne to vindicate herself. Her agent had already tried. "No luck. Her phone's been off the entire time. Something might've happened."

Kala's heart skipped a beat, "Darren, you knew Vivienne before all this. Could you please help me find her? I'm really out of options here."

The set was in disarray.

Vivienne was oblivious to the drama as she was immersed in her work at YQ Research Center. Percival patiently waited outside her lab, with Brian occasionally peeking in.

Brody sat beside him, his gaze fixed on the lab door, "Specter Healer has been in there forever. It's just a potion. Why all the secrecy? Won't even let me in!"

Brian looked at him with disdain, "What good would you do inside? Just get in the way? Bro, no offense, but if Vivienne can't figure it out, what makes you think you can?"

Brody retorted, "And who spent years chasing someone they couldn't find? If I'm on par with your Vivienne, why can't I research?"

"There's something special about this substance if they're testing it on my master, Karen. If I can crack it, maybe I'll cure this poison in me, and then we'll see who keeps me locked up!"

Brian was taken aback. Was this really something to declare so openly?

Percival, absorbed in his laptop, couldn't help but glance at Brody, thinking perhaps Vivienne's concoctions had affected his intelligence.

Feeling the piercing stares, Brody belatedly realized what he had blurted out and was about to explain himself when the lab door chimed open.

Vivienne emerged in her white lab coat, holding a vial. "I had no idea your ambitions were so lofty. Perhaps in your dreams, they might come true."

As she passed Brody, she handed him the vial. "Give this to your guinea pig. Of course, if you're not afraid to die, you're welcome to try it yourself."

Without waiting for his reaction, Vivienne breezed over to Percival. "Mr. Wolf, sorry to keep you waiting. Let's go get something to eat. I'm famished."

Her voice carried a hint of coquetry, which Percival found endearing. He affectionately flicked her nose, "What's your fancy?" "Hamburger? No, we just had that last night."

Vivienne wrinkled her nose, thinking of the numbers on her scale creeping upward, and decisively scrapped the idea. With that thought, she pulled out her phone, looking to see what delectable options were available online.

Her thumb pressed down on his phone's power button for the second time before it dawned on her that it had died! Probably sometime during the night when she'd forgotten to charge it. "Hey, Mr. Wolf, got a power bank on you? My phone's kicked the bucket."

Percival blinked, his hand instinctively patting down his pockets before he remembered he was too inattentive with such gadgets. "Nah, use mine. We're heading home right after dinner anyway—it won't matter for that little while."

With the matter settled, they prepared to leave.

Brody, the quintessential lab rat with his precious vials and beakers, was too engrossed in his work to pay any attention to the conversation. It was only when he noticed them getting ready to take off that he hastily packed up his experiments. "Hold up, did you figure out what this concoction is for?"

Without turning back, Vivienne tossed her reply over her shoulder, "Check the lab report inside. It's all there for you to read."



## Chapter 723

The buzz of the bustling barbecue joint filled the air as Vivienne savored the morsels Percival fed her. A thought struck her, and she looked up with curiosity. "Any word on Huxley yet?"

Over the sizzling grill, Percival flipped a juicy burger and shook his head. "That guy's slippery. If he's involved, his crew won't let him get caught that easily."

Vivienne nodded in agreement. "Ever since Samantha vanished, GTO's been eerily quiet." As Percival handed her a slice of steak, he raised an eyebrow, "You don't think GTO's behind this?"

She shook her head, lacking evidence but trusting her instincts. "If GTO had their hands on that kind of tech, they'd have flaunted it ages ago. No way they'd wait this long and then put Huxley on the job."

"Mr. Wolf, I'll have some of that," she said casually, pointing at a plate of ribs.

Vivienne continued, "If I'm right, this has got to do with that woman in red. That potion—if you can even call it that—seems more like a refined kind of hex. It's designed to mess with your head; the actual effects, we'll have to wait for Brody's lab report."

Percival's surprise was evident. "Mom's in a coma; how could this drug work on someone who's asleep? Unless... it can force them awake?"

Since marrying Vivienne, Percival had naturally started calling Karen 'Mom', despite her not having woken up yet. It was a term of endearment he was getting used to.

Vivienne laughed lightly, wiping her mouth with a napkin. "The human brain is the world's most complex mystery. Modern medicine can manipulate certain emotions, but it can't control the body. Reviving someone from a coma is next to impossible."

If such a drug existed, vegetative states wouldn't be such a dilemma in medical science.

"Anyway, with the target on Mom's back, the hospital's no longer safe. Are you full?"

Percival took her word as gospel, quickly standing up with her even before she could answer. At that moment, his phone rang. Aaron?

"Why would he have my number?" He wondered.

Percival had made a note of Aaron's number to protect him from swooping in on his precious Vivienne.

"What's up?" Vivienne asked, having just paid the bill with Percival's card. She saw the furrow in his brow and peeked at the caller ID.

Recognizing the familiar name, she let out a puzzled "Aaron?" and took the phone to answer, "Aaron, what's going on?"

Aaron's anxious voice immediately sounded, "Vivienne, it's bad! Your cousin's caught up in something nasty. Check the trending news!"

Meanwhile, a luxury car screeched to a halt outside the barbecue place, drawing screams and gasps from onlookers as sparks flew from the tires.

Then, as the car doors swung open, two figures dashed out and went into the barbecue joint like a gust of wind, leaving the bystanders in awe.

"What just flew by?" "That car! So cool, I want one!"

"Ramona's still blabbing online, and Ms. Brooks has been taken home by her agent. But the internet is dragging her through the mud, and they can't reach you, so they called me."

Recalling Darren's panicked plea for help, Aaron spoke rapidly, and Vivienne's expression darkened with each word. The waitress nearby trembled at the sudden shift in the young lady's demeanor.

"Vivienne! Percival!"

Before she could speak, the restaurant's door burst open, and two agitated figures, Griffin and Leopold, rushed in. Griffin, particularly, had red, swollen eyes as if she had been crying, a stark contrast to her usually cheerful demeanor.

She barely noticed what Vivienne was doing as she grabbed her hand, "Vivienne, please help me. My grandpa, he's not going to make it!"

"Aaron, hold on."

Vivienne scanned the room, crowded at meal time, and sensed Percival's discomfort at the attention. Leopold caught the signal and was the first to act, pulling Griffin aside. "This isn't the place for this talk. Let's step outside."

Percival wrapped an arm around Vivienne's shoulder. "I've got a place nearby. Let's head there."

In the car, Percival sat in the passenger seat, eyeing the rear-view mirror. Griffin was a pitiful sight, clinging to Vivienne and sobbing.

Leopold, driving, felt Percival's judgmental gaze as if silently critiquing his ability to comfort his girlfriend, thinking, "Come on, Percival, who gets jealous over a woman?"

"What exactly happened?" Percival had never seen Leopold so serious.

Vivienne could hardly breathe with Griffin clinging to her. She managed to ask, "Start from the beginning; what happened to him?"

All in one day!

She had just managed to take care of the situation with Kala and coordinate with the company for a | S  
ar eRe. ere Nach t even put hef phone down when Griffin and Leopold showed up, one in tears, the  
other with a grave look. And now, after several minutes in the car, they had yet to speak.

Griffin, finally sitting up, managed to say, "My grandpa, something's wrong with him. He woke up this morning and started... dancing like he was possessed."

"Dancing?" Vivienne raised an eyebrow in disbelief, the words almost forming on her face. Percival raised an eyebrow in question as he heard the news. What kind of absurd poison makes one dance?

Griffin had finally stopped crying, wiping away her tears, "I'm serious, it was like some freaky possessiah {ve got the vi ep hoam SH Jou. He just started lailing around, his limbs all out of control, eyes glazed over. No matter how we yelled, he wouldn't respond, like he was under some sort of spell. Right, Leopold?"

Leopold, who was driving, nodded vigorously. "Yeah, yeah, Vivienne, you should have seen it. Godfrey's moves, they were just like those you'd see in a horror movie."

He had been utterly shocked when he went to find Griffin earlier.

Usually, Godfrey Martinez was a pillar of stability in his mind, a man of substance and depth.

Who could have imagined that one

day he'd be thrashing around Ji marionette itp cewivrataché d tated ten an eerie shade of blue, looking for all the world like a freshly unearthed zombie.

"Percival, I took some photos too. Just look for yourself; it was downright terrifying. At first glance, I thought it was the start of the zombie apocalypse."

He managed to pass his phone over to Percival.

Meanwhile, Vivienne was holding Griffin's phone, her hands still trembling from the shock.

Vivienne and Percival exchanged a glance, a mutual skepticism reflected in their eyes.

Was it any wonder that Griffin and Leopold seemed to have such chemistry? Godfrey was sick, and their first instinct was to shoot a video and snap pictures?

How had the Martinez family not throttled them yet? But alas, Vivienne hadn't managed to watch the video. Before she could even click play, her phone—juiced up from Leopold's car charger—began to buzz.

Brody's voice came through the call, tinged with utter despair, "Specter Healer! Where on earth did you get that medicine? She's been hopping around her room for half an hour! It took a heavy-duty sedative to knock her out, and she's still hopping in her sleep! My spotless lab is a mess now!"

Brian's laughter boomed, "Hahaha, Vivienne, where did you score that prank potion? That woman, she's like a marionette straight out of a movie, absolutely hilarious!"

At the Martinez Mansion. Griffin's parents, Stellan and Penelope, stood guard outside the patriarch's room.

To better observe Godfrey, they had gouged a peephole into the solid wooden door. The Martinez family circled around it, three layers deep.

They peered inside at Godfrey with a mix of emotions as if viewing a rare specimen. "When's Griffin getting back? If he keeps this up, he'll bleed out." Stellan was practically glued to the peephole, almost sticking his head through.

His wife, Penelope, stood shoulder-to-shoulder with him, mirroring his posture, her face etched with worry. "Who could have snuck into our home undetected in the middle of the night?"

Behind them, Godfrey's only daughter, Audrey Martinez, snorted, "That's not all. Dad was once a renowned master among the noble families. How could he be taken down so easily? If word gets out, it'll be the laughingstock of the elite."

"Audrey!" Her brother Lancelot Martinez scolded, "That's still our father you're talking about! Can't you see what state he's in? Don't you feel any pity?"

Audrey scoffed, "Pity him? Who's going to pity me? If it weren't for his insistence that I marry into the Grimshaws, would I be like this now?"

Pointing at the scar on her face, her gaze towards the room was filled with resentment.

She wasn't here out of concern for Godfrey.

She feared that if he died, her brothers wouldn't even tell her, denying her a share of the inheritance. Lancelot glared at her. "You're beyond reason!"

"Enough!" Stellan, the eldest, couldn't take the bickering any longer and shouted, "What's with all the fighting? Lancelot, call Griffin. See where they are. If we delay any further, it might be too late for Dad!"

Through the peephole, they saw Godfrey hopping around just as Griffin had described to Vivienne, using hands and feet alike. Even for someone trained in martial arts, the high difficulty of his movements made Stellan shake his head in disbelief.

The pale face, coupled with dark circles under his eyes, looked especially ghastly!

A closer look revealed fresh blood slowly trickling from the corners of Godfrey's mouth, his nostrils, even his ears!

Stellan was frantic! He had been in charge of the Martinez family's biochemical weapons project and prided himself on his comprehensive understanding of various viruses.

But he had never seen a virus like this, one that literally made a person dance to death! Who could it be? Who wanted to harm the Martinez family like this?

Just then, Griffin's urgent and anxious voice came from outside, "Vivienne's here." "Griffin, you're back! Where's the Specter Healer? Where is she?"

Stellan rushed out at the sound of the voice, his bloodshot eyes darting around, "Griffin, where's the Specter Healer you mentioned?"

Griffin, tugging at Vivienne's wrist, said, "Dad, it's her, Leopold's senior, Vivienne. She's the Specter Healer."

"And him," she pointed at Percival standing nearby, "he's Vivienne's husband, Percival. You should know him, Dad. Let me take Vivienne in to treat Grandpa now. Any questions, you can ask Percival."

Percival trailed behind with a twitch of his lips, "Mr. Martinez."

Stellan couldn't stop his determined daughter, watching their retreating figures, puzzled. "Mr. Ellington, your wife is the Specter Healer?"

Vivienne's identity as the Specter Healer was known only to those close to her; it was a secret kept from the wider world.

Partly, this was Vivienne's own doing to avoid being overwhelmed by the sick and needy if her identity became common knowledge. So, not many were aware of it.

She looked too young. Nothing like the legends.

"Indeed." Percival nodded, a hint of pride in his voice.

Leopold, following behind, chimed in, "Mr. Martinez, you can rest easy. Vivienne is amazing; there's no illness in this world that can stump her!"

"Easy for you to say!" Audrey blocked the doorway with a sneer, "What can a girl, barely out of puberty, possibly know? Stellan, don't let them fool you."

Griffin had dragged Vivienne all the way here, and she hadn't even had a chance to speak.

Hearing this, her eyebrows arched gracefully as she cast a fleeting glance at Audrey, who was blocking the door. This woman, she didn't seem too worried about Godfrey.

Lancelot frowned, a mild irritation etching his brow as he observed his sister's manner of speech.

After all, Vivienne was poised to be the future matriarch of the prestigious Ellington family, and lately, Audrey had been far too lax in her decorum.

"Audrey, that's enough," he chided with a firm tone. "Mind your manners!"

He turned to Vivienne, attempting to smooth over the tension. "My sister is quite headstrong. Please don't take her words to heart. It's just... your youth makes it hard for some to believe you're the renowned Specter Healer."

Vivienne tilted her head, a wisp of defiance in her gesture. "The Martinez family has its share of young prodigies as well. Is it truly so difficult to comprehend?"

"The Martinez family has its own legacy, but what gives you the right to compare yourself to us?" Audrey scoffed, her chin lifted in haughty pride.

Griffin, who had been silent until then, bristled at the insult. "Do you doubt even me now? I can easily take you on. Do you think I am unaware of her skills? Or worse, do you suspect that I would harm Grandpa?"

"You impudent girl, how dare you speak to your elders in such a tone!" Audrey's gaze shifted to her. "Stellan, is this how you raise your daughter? With no respect or manners? I can hardly fathom how she's fit to inherit the secret techniques of the Martinez family!"



Leopold, who had little patience for Griffin being spoken to in such a manner, shoved Audrey aside Ayiore it. All you eon rae st i\$ running bavectint If you're so useless, why interfere with others trying to help? Anyone would think you despise Godfrey, the way you're so eager for your own father to pass!"

"You—you little brat! What nonsense are you spouting?" Audrey's eyes flickered with a guilty spark, unnoticed by none.

Her slip did not escape Vivienne's keen observation, nor did it elude Percival, who had just joined the gathering.

## Chapter 725

Percival gestured reassuringly for Vivienne to walk in.

Griffin didn't give a damn, shot Audrey a glowering look, and shoved open the door to let Vivienne in, "Grandpa's in your hands now, Vivienne."

Vivienne stumbled a bit from the push. Thankfully, her footing was solid, or she might have ended up face-first on the floor.

Talk about unexpected. No wonder she caught Leopold's eye. Both of them had a way of taking you by surprise.

Meanwhile, Kala was holed up at home.

When Darren got back from wrapping up some work outside, he walked in to find her chilling and watching TV, "Kala, you alright? All that online drama sorted out?"

Kala popped a potato chip into her mouth, "Not even close." "So, you're just... chilling?" How could she be so laid-back?

Ronald came out of the kitchen with a fruit bowl in his hands. "Don't mind her. She's been like this since she got back from the studio. Vivienne called earlier. The agency's taking over the whole mess, told her to take a few days off. Kala's over the moon."

"Well, she's happy, at least."

Darren was exasperated. "The agency's swamped. Ramona came prepared; high-def videos are all over the net, and the trolls are practically crashing the platforms with their venom."

As he spoke, he couldn't even understand. "I'm baffled, really. What's your beef with Ramona that she'd set up such a scheme to target you?"

"She's not after me." Kala finally tore her gaze away from the screen. "She's trying to drive a wedge between me and Vivienne, though I can't fathom her endgame."

"But she's a lousy actress," Kala spread her hands dismissively, "I'm not falling for such a cheap trick." Darren clapped, impressed. "That's my cousin. I thought you were gonna be mobbed today when I heard you two squabbling."

Ronald hadn't witnessed the confrontation. but he had seen more than enough of the videos online. "This Ramona chick, she came out of nowhere?"

Darren nodded. "More like dropped from the sky. People in the biz first thought she had some kind of backing, but turns out, zip. Nothing."

The info on her was neat and tidy: parents were just regular company employees.

Aside from graduating from an Ivy League school, there wasn't much else notable about her. Her sudden rise to fame in the cutthroat entertainment industry was baffling, not just to others but even to Darren, who didn't normally cross paths with Ramona's type.

Ronald frowned in thought after hearing Darren's take. "Seems like our adversary isn't afraid of us knowing she's a nobody."

Darren agreed, "What's more, whoever is behind her has been laying the groundwork for a while now. Probably tied to that organization, the boss has been investigating."

"What organization?" Kala was curious. The last time Vivienne came to talk to Ronald, they kept their conversation private in his room. She only caught the tail end of it and was largely in the dark about what Vivienne and Ronald were up to.

Surprised that even Darren knew, her curiosity was piqued. "Vivienne's been out of touch for ages. Are you guys into something | don't know about?"

Ronald was at a loss for words. Revealing anything might blow his past involvement with Scott.

Glancing at Darren with a hint of irritation for his loose lips, he switched off the TV and ushered Kala to stand, "It's nothing. What could we possibly be keeping from you? Let's go have dinner."

Meanwhile, at CK Penitentiary.

In a fully sealed room, identical to any ordinary cell, there was a bed, a desk, and even a coffee table set with coffee paraphernalia, indistinguishable from those outside, with the serene scent of coffee pervading the small space. Not a single guard was in sight.

Francis from the notorious GTO organization, who should have been resting in an unmarked grave, was sitting calmly at the coffee table. His wrists and ankles bore electronic cuffs.

Even his attire was the same familiar style recognized by those who knew him when he was alive, his face always wearing a faint, serene smile. He held a book, seemingly engrossed, turning pages just as he used to.

But if anyone were there, they'd see his eyes weren't focused at all. They were cold, empty, devoid of any emotion, much like a machine.

In fact, he was a machine. A flawed prototype of the androids developed by Ronald, capable of mimicking human actions and voice but not emotions.

He had escaped destruction solely due to Leopold's morbid sense of humor.

Leopold had figured having a decoy might draw out the remnants of GTO.

He hadn't considered that, at this point, no one from GTO would risk their life for someone who might not even be alive. Thomas and Anna laughed at his fanciful thinking, saying he was too old to be daydreaming.

Percival, surprisingly, didn't object. After all, it was just an android following commands. And CK wasn't really of any strategic value; it was just bait in the water; who knew what it might catch?

Now, after a month, the android that had survived a series of unfortunate events remained there, with the surveillance team having lost all hope and Leopold having completely forgotten about it.

But today, it seemed like there was a fish nibbling at the bait.

CK, as an organization rivaling GTO, boasted a penitentiary comparable to Vanguard Age's CO max security facilities. Surveillance cameras were everywhere, and the corridors were riddled with traps.

Anyone without a map of the place trying to break in would immediately be detected by the infrared scanners.

But at this moment...

Samantha strolled down the penitentiary corridor as if it were her own backyard, the click-clack of her high heels echoing crisply. The android in the cell sensed someone approaching. Its rigid head finally moved, turning towards the door.

Blind to the outside, it could still hear a gentle female voice drift in, "Long time no see."

Samantha caressed the wall, her eyes shimmering with a complex, shadowy light.

Voice recognition allowed the android to quickly find its corresponding master in its memory chip, "I heard Vivienne and her crew found you. Are all your wounds healed?"

Samantha's movements froze as she listened to the emotionless voice. Suddenly, everything glipkedahaliste glanced that WAInking red light of the surveillance camera, "Pretty much. | just came to see that you're doing 'fine.' Now that | see you are, | can rest easy."

What she meant by 'fine' was anybody's guess.

The flawed programming of the reject was evident, and it failed to produce a response in time before the sound of high heels echoed again.

Just as Samantha vanished from sight, Percival, ensconced in the grandeur of the Martinez Mansion, received a call from his underling, "Are you sure she went to the prison alone?"

The voice on the other end was cool yet respectful, "The face in the surveillance footage matches the photo you gave us."

After a brief pause, the caller added, "However, initially, we couldn't access the prison's cameras. It seemed she used some gadget to jam them. We only realized she was there after she left."

It was a daring move, no doubt about it.

And yet, they were at their wits' end with the female F-Poison, Lele catch the one wg gaulessig through the fiagels or both Vivienne and Percival. The leader of the GTO organization clearly had some tricks up her sleeve.

Percival frowned, his gaze shifting back to the closed door. "Understood. Wait for my instructions."

Chapter 726

Click. The moment the phone call ended, Godfrey's front door swung open again.

Vivienne glanced down at the huddled Martinez family by the doorway; her lips pursed into a slight smile. "Mr. Martinez, such formalities are hardly necessary."

"Everybody up, now!" Stellan's cheeks flushed with embarrassment as he glared at Leopold, sprawled out behind him.

A cluster of people awkwardly rose to their feet, their faces painted with awkwardness. "Uh, Ms. Hawthorn, we're really grateful for your help. Please, stay for dinner to thank you for taking care of my father."

Audrey, lounging on the sofa, glanced over and snorted disdainfully, then looked away, indifferent to whether Godfrey lived or died.

"Stellan, aren't you even gonna ask?" But she couldn't stand to see the Martinez family have it easy. "What if Ms. Hawthorn's treatment kills Dad?"

Griffin's retort was sharper, "Because we're not blind, we can see with our own eyes. Unlike you, sitting there like a frog in a well!"

As soon as Vivienne entered the room, she used her silver needles to stabilize Godfrey, halting his convulsions. The rest of her methods were a mystery to them.

But through the open door, they could see Godfrey's color improving under Vivienne's care. Clearly, her treatment was working. Ignoring Audrey's sour expression, Griffin cuddled up to Vivienne. "You're amazing, Vivienne. You're my hero!"

Leopold beamed with pride at the compliments directed at Vivienne, more pleased than if they were for himself. "Of course, you've seen who Vivienne is with, right? Let me tell you, when it comes to medicine, there's no one better than her."

Percival raised an eyebrow. "Sucking up won't help you. Remember, you're paying for the scratch you put on my car."

"Vivienne..." Leopold pleaded with puppy-dog eyes, "Considering I'm your youngest junior, maybe we can forget about the car, huh?"

Vivienne smiled subtly. "Remember to pay up."

What kind of joke was this? Mr. Wolf's car was basically hers, too. The car was barely a day old when Leopold's impromptu stunt left a glaring scratch on it! God only knows the murderous rage she felt when stepping out of the BBQ joint and seeing that white gash.

Without further ado, Vivienne took Percival's arm and addressed Stellan. "Godfrey's not out of the woods yet. He'll need a couple more treatments. This toxin is a new one, and we might need to find an antidote to eradicate it completely."

"Ms. Hawthorn, you seem quite familiar with this," Stellan said, puzzled by her confidence.

Vivienne didn't shy away from the truth. "My mother encountered the same issue yesterday. Luckily, someone was with her, so the perpetrator didn't succeed."

At first, she thought the attack was solely targeting her mother. Turns out, it was a wider net.

Vivienne's thoughts grew heavy. The enemy lurked in the shadows while she stood in the light. This adversary was proving to be even trickier than the F-Poison.

"Mr. Martinez, we have other matters today, so we'll be taking our leave," Vivienne said, preparing to go.

Midway, she paused. "Mr. Martinez, if you're confused, maybe look into the ancient warrior lineages. See if there's a family known for using poison derived from insects. That's where this toxin comes from.

The enemy is likely experimenting with a drug to control neural functions, which is why Godfrey was in that state."

Lancelot's pupils narrowed at her words. "You're saying my father was poisoned with that stuff? Stellan, it could be..."

Instantly, he thought of that particular family, and Stellan seemed to agree.

But he glanced at Vivienne, then subtly at Audrey, silent on the sofa. "Lancelot, let's not jump to conclusions without evidence."

"Ms. Hawthorn, rest assured. This concerns my father, and I will investigate thoroughly. However, if he has another episode, we'll still need your expertise."

Vivienne's eyes flickered, and with a nonchalant wave, she said, "It's no trouble at all. Now, if you'll excuse us, Leopold." "Huh?"

Griffin punched him lightly. "What do you mean, 'huh'? You wrecked Vivienne and Percival's car; now get moving and take them home!"

Her punch wasn't gentle, and Leopold winced. "I'll take them, I'll take them. But why hit me? I only scratched Vivienne's car because of you! Partly your fault, too!"

Griffin clung to Vivienne. "She didn't ask me to pay for it. You were driving; you pay up. Surely, you're going to say you can't even afford that much, right?"

"Who said I can't?" Aman's pride can't be challenged, especially not in matters of finance and especially not by Griffin.

Leopold's competitive spirit flared up. "Of course, I can afford it! It's just one car! Even if I wrecked all of Percival's cars, I could afford it!"

Percival's brow twitched. "You want to wreck them all?!"



Leopold backpedaled. "No, no, I didn't mean that. I was just... making an example, really, just an example." He laughed awkwardly, scratching the back of his head, a master of deflection.

Pretending to notice something outside, he made a beeline for the door. "The view from here looks pretty good, Vivienne, Percival, I'll check it out. You two better follow quickly."

Vivienne: "Can this guy ever tie the knot?"

Percival: "Probably not. Whoever sets their sights on him must be looking through some seriously rose-colored glasses." Griffin: "Why do I feel like I'm the punchline here?"

Stellan: "Who in their right mind would want this goofball as a son-in-law?"

Oblivious to how his image had already been heavily damaged in his future father-in-law's eyes, Leopold managed to deliver Vivienne and Percival to the Perez Mansion.

As they got out of the car, Vivienne finally seemed to remember that Leopold was her junior brother. In her gentle and understanding way, she invited him to join the Perez family for a dinner gathering.

Leopold, thick-skinned as ever, brushed off the reminder of as

debt he owed them, with a single sentence. Gratefully he muttered to himself, "Vivienne's always got my back," and strode towards the Perez home.

Before he left, he couldn't resist boasting in the junior disciples' chat group: [No way, no way) Surelyne | angis missed SORT Vivienne's invite to the family get-together, right? I mean, why wouldn't they? It's not like they're always this lucky like me.]]

Jerry: [Just say you got a death wish.] Larry: [Leopold's been floating on cloud nine lately. Need me to bring you back down to earth?] Gary: [Looks like you're getting along swell with the ladies at my joint. How about you come work for me?"]

The rest of the disciples: [Why bother talking to him? Drop the address; it's about time Leopold learns a lesson today.]

## Chapter 727

Vivienne sighed deeply as she read the text message screenshot Donald had sent her, feigning distress, thinking, "Seriously, is being this petty absolutely necessary?"

Percival's hand had never left her shoulder, so he naturally didn't miss the message popping up on her phone.

Watching another man throw a temper tantrum at his wife, Percival felt the acidic jealousy bubble up inside him. But if one were to trace the root of the issue, it would lead back to one of the infamous trio of numbskulls, who had been swaggering around without a care in the world.

Percival's eyes narrowed slightly, sending a shiver down Leopold's spine.

Before he could react, he felt something smack the back of his head, and he spun around, ready to fight, "Who's there? Who dares to hit me? Do you have a death wish..."

His threatening words trailed off as he met Percival's icy gaze. Leopold's normally confident facade crumbled upon seeing Percival.

Awkwardly straightening up, he thought, of course, who else but Vivienne and Percival, the dynamic duo, could be behind him? No one else would dare to mess with him. He should have known better than to get involved with this mess.

Ever since they got married, Percival had been getting more and more possessive. "Vivienne?" Maddox called out from the doorway, having watched the trio for a while.

Noticing the three of them chatting in the yard, instead of coming inside and suspecting something was up, he stepped out, "Why aren't you coming in? Dinner's ready; we're just waiting on you and Percival."

"And me, don't forget about me," Leopold interjected, not willing to be left out. Having taken his lumps and noted his grievances, he was determined to partake in the meal today, or it would be a total loss.

"Alright, alright, you too," Maddox replied indifferently, stepping aside to let them in. "Dad had the chef prepare your favorite dish, Vivienne. You've been so busy lately; you need to eat well."

It was Vivienne's and Karen's first family gathering since acknowledging their relationship, and the grand dining room brimmed with people.

The household staff had been given the day off, so the only people present were the core members of the Perez family and their special friends, like Richard and Finnian.

And Leopold, who had shamelessly squeezed his way in for a free meal.

"Once Sasha wakes up, our family will truly be complete," Jasper observed with warmth as he looked around at the gathered family, missing only the comatose Karen and her ever-watchful sister Willa.

Eldest son Luke Perez, seated to his left, reassured him, "Don't worry, Dad. With Vivienne here, Sasha will be just fine. You shouldn't fret."

His wife Carmen Pendleton chimed in, "That's right, Dad. We should be happy that they found their way back to us."

Fredrick poured a drink for Jasper, "Dad, it's a day for celebration. I know Sasha said you shouldn't drink, but let's toast to happiness today!"

"Uncle Fredrick, my mom's not here, but I am," Vivienne said with a smile that reached her eyes.

Fredrick stiffened at her words, managing a sheepish grin, "Just one drink, one drink. Don't worry, Vivienne. I'll make sure Dad doesn't have any more after this!"

His guilty, sycophantic demeanor would have had his subordinates roaring with laughter if they'd seen him.

Yet, no one at the table seemed to think anything was amiss. Alice Churchill, Fredrick's patient wife, rolled her eyes at him, "You're hopeless, Fredrick. Don't worry, Vivienne. I'm here, and I won't let your uncles drink too much."

"Frederick, you had it coming," laughed Maddox, the only bachelor at the table, his voice booming with amusement. Fredrick's cool glance swept over to him, but Maddox showed no sign of intimidation.

Sitting next to Percival, Yuri quietly matched him drink for drink while keeping an eye on everyone at the table. Seeing Fredrick's menacing look, he sent a sympathetic look to Maddox, who was still laughing heartily.

Ever since Luke took over the family business, they had all grown up under Fredrick's strict rule. Yet, Maddox seemed to have a short memory.

It had not been long since the last time he had angered Fredrick, and the echoes of his pained howls were still fresh. Now, he had already forgotten and was making the same mistake. No wonder he couldn't catch Willa's eye.

Vivienne couldn't agree more. She sat next to Percival, flanked by the family's two youngest members - Natalia and Yasmine. The kids adored Vivienne and chatted with her incessantly, offering her their treats, "Here, Vivienne, you eat." The green bean pastry in the child's hand was squished beyond recognition.

While Zelda, their mother, cringed at the sight, Vivienne accepted it without a second thought, "Thank you, Yasmine. It's delicious."

Zelda started to protest, but Vivienne waved her off, "It's okay, Aunt Zelda. I don't mind." She had eaten far worse while on missions. Compared to that, Yasmine's mangled pastry was a luxury.

Richard and Finnian watched the Perez family's playful bickering and then turned their attention to Vivienne with her young cousins. Richard mused, "Vivienne's so good with kids. When she has her own, they're going to love their mom even more."

Finnian, recalling Vivienne as a child, smiled warmly, "Of course. You didn't see her when she was little. SHE WES yeti behaved had always tagged along after me, calling me 'Master.' But now... Well, kids grow up, and they're not as cute anymore." "What did you just say?" Jasper bristled at these words. Missing out on Vivienne's childhood was regret enough; he wouldn't stand for any suggestion that she had lost her charm with age. This old coot! Acting all smug after getting a sweet deal?

"Our Vivienne is doing so brilliantly now. Just look at the other kids her age out there. None of them can hold a candle to her achievements!" Jasper slammed his hand down on the table with a thud.

Eyes bulging, Finnian got into a heated argument with him.

Vivienne, blessed with keen hearing, felt the warmth drain from her cheeks that had been flushed with laughter from Richard's teasing as Jasper roared in the background.

The other old-timers at the table, oblivious to her thoughts, launched into a fierce debate over whether Vivienne was as adorable as she used to be.

Richard, ever the instigator, firmly sided with Jasper. Finnian, outnumbered and outgunned, slowly began to lose ground. Begrudgingly conceding, he couldn't help but reminisce.

Their initial topic had been about how cute Vivienne's future kids would be, right? How on earth had the conversation taken such a wild detour?

Finnian glanced at his old chum, who was still listing Vivienne's virtues to Richard, and with an undiagnosed hump, nicer cry down. "Hold on, you two fossils. I was clearly talking about how cute Vivienne's future kids would be. What are you rambling on about?"

Richard was just about to chime in with Finnian's train of thought when Maddox, seizing the chance to divert Fredrick's razor- sharp glares from himself, interjected casually, "Hold up, Finnian. That's not quite right. Our Vivienne's just a young thing; babies are a ways off for her."

"Exactly, my point! Vivienne's only twenty. What's this rush about kids?" Jasper nodded approvingly at his third son, waving his hand dismissively, "They should focus on their careers for now. Children can wait a few more years."

Finnian is spouting nonsense again!

The family had only just reclaimed their precious lost lamb, and the score for whisking her away without so much as a by-your- leave hadn't been settled yet. They couldn't let Percival get too smug about it!

Leopold, shoveling down his food, glanced from one to another, then at Vivienne, whose cheeks were tinted with a fresh bloom of red.

Struck by a sudden inspiration, he blurted out, "But hey, they're already hitched. Having kids is just a matter of time, and I bet any child of Vivienne and Percival's will be a real looker, even prettier than the two of them."

Silence fell like a curtain as he finished speaking. All eyes converged on Leopold.

Leopold shivered, "Did I, uh, say something wrong?"

Richard was the first to recover, "Wrong? Absolutely not. You nailed it, buddy. I'm right there with you, Leopold!" Jasper opened his mouth to argue, but his brain, traitorously, continued along Leopold's line of thought.

Well, it did make a sort of sense.

Their Vivienne was a dead ringer for Sasha, a real beauty, and that Ellington boy wasn't too hard on the eyes either. Wouldn't their child be the cutest kid on the planet?

Jasper's eyes sparked to life in an instant.

Meanwhile, a few aunts and uncles stared at their suddenly swayed father, on the verge of tears.

Yuri quietly sipped his drink, his gaze drifting noncommittally over to Percival.

Vivienne's lips twitched, wondering how the conversation had veered back to procreation so quickly.

She patted her stomach and glanced at Percival, "Mr. Wolf..."

Before she could continue, Percival picked up the thread, "Vivienne, don't worry. We can wait to have kids. I'll follow your lead." Vivienne, speechless, fought the urge to roll her eyes.

Everyone else is one thing, but why was Mr. Wolf acting up like these off-key elders?

Seeing the disdain and frustration in the girl's eyes, Percival's gaze softened, and he ruffled Vivienne's hair playfully, "I'm just kidding. We'll think about kids after the wedding."

Their elders' plans weren't important right now. They were still busy with a laundry list of things.

Lucas had tasked them to set up their own department, and while he and Vivienne had drafted a list of potential members, they hadn't finalized their assessments.

Samantha, the ancient warrior lineage, not to mention that mysterious woman—none of these issues were settled. The most crucial reason was that Karen hadn't awakened, and Vivienne's father was still missing.

Their decision to get married was made on the fly, but the wedding would need to be carefully planned, to be held in the presence of Vivienne's parents, followed by children.

Vivienne looked up into his eyes and smiled, "Okay."

Her Mr. Wolf always seemed to understand what was on her mind.

Over at Kaitlyn's villa, the night was deepening.

A low-key black Porsche pulled into the villa complex.

Beneath the warm, yellow streetlights, the car approached Kaitlyn's home at a leisurely pace.

After the engine cut off, Victoria stepped out, assisted by her assistant Walter.

"Is this where Kaitlyn's staying now?" She took in the sprawling villa, bathed in cozy light, and removed her sunglasses.

Walter nodded, "According to our intel, yes. It seems like Vivienne found them this place. They haven't been here long. Vivienne's men were guarding the place, keeping us from finding it. But recently, their security seems to have slackened. Our guys followed Amelia and found this place."

Victoria's lips curled. "I didn't realize Vivienne held Kaitlyn in such high regard."

She slipped her sunglasses into her bag and ascended the stairs with her heels clicking, arriving just as the Littleton family sat down for dinner.

Kaitlyn, setting the last dish on the table, heard the doorbell and wondered, "Who could that be at this hour?" "Maybe Ms. Hawthorn?" Tyler wheeled himself towards the door.

Amelia dashed from the kitchen, "Dad, let me get it. I'll see if it's Vivienne."

Not waiting for a response, she hurried to the door.



Under Tyler's indulgent and worried gaze, Amelia swung open the door, "Vivien..."

Her cheerful greeting was cut short as she saw who stood before her. Tyler's face paled.

"Amelia, come here!"

"Amelia!"

Victoria's face materialized before them, draining the color from Tyler's already fair complexion.

Instinctively, he shouted at Amelia at the door!

But it was too late.

By the time Kaitlyn arrived, Amelia's small frame was already ensnared in Walter's arms.

Amelia had seen Victoria many times and burst into tears at the sight of her, "Let me go! Bad lady, let me go! Mommy, help!" "Shut up!" Victoria frowned in annoyance and ordered, "Walter, gag her!"

Then, she turned her gaze to Kaitlyn, who stood frozen, her lips curving into a mocking smile, "Kaitlyn, long time no see. Seems like you've been doing quite well?"

Her tone was as casual as if they were old friends catching up.

Kaitlyn's body involuntarily shivered as she gasped, "How on earth did you find this place? Let go of my daughter, Victoria. If you've got a beef with anyone, take it up with me!"

Victoria folded her arms across her chest, a smirk playing on her lips "You think Vivienne would keep you safe? Kaitlyn, as long as you have what we want, there's no escaping us!"

Her piercing gaze swept over the little girl, Amelia, who was crying incessantly in Walter's arms.

Her eyes flitted with a hint of resolve as she steelled herself. "If you want to save your daughter, hand over what I want! Otherwise, you know what I'm capable of."

A sharp cry echoed through the room as Walter's grip tightened mercilessly. The pain was too much for Amelia, who screamed out loud.

The commotion alarmed the elders upstairs, who, with shaky legs, descended the stairs only to be confronted by the sight of Victoria, which instantly brought back memories of that dreadful day.

Their bodies nearly gave way beneath them, almost collapsing to the floor in shock.

The panic that seized their hearts turned to rage upon seeing Amelia in their captors' hands, Kaitlyn's mother, stepped forward. "Please, spare Amelia, she's just a child. If you must, direct your anger at us, the adults."

Victoria let out a cold, mocking laugh as she sauntered into the room, with Walter slamming the door shut (11 and perfectly aware as always been with your daughter-in-law. She's playing hardball, refusing to give up the goods. So, it looks like your granddaughter will have to bear the brunt of it."

## Chapter 729

Victoria's eyes suddenly sharpened. "I don't have all day to mess around with you. Hand over the recipe now! Kaitlyn, for the life of me, I can't understand. You've guarded that worthless piece of paper for so long; the Littletons are gone, and yet you cling to it. What use is it to you? Hand it over to me, and if you're cooperative, I'll ensure your family has a normal life."

Victoria had heard that Kaitlyn possessed a recipe that could bring the dead back to life. She was determined to get her hands on it. Kaitlyn, with Amelia held hostage by Walter, was torn inside, her face alternating between shades of pale and flushed.

After a long struggle, Kaitlyn bit her lip and looked up at Victoria, "The recipe is already with Ms. Hawthorn. Even if you kill us, it's useless to you."

Victoria's face changed color, and then she lunged forward, gripping Kaitlyn's throat, "Do you think I'm a fool, Kaitlyn? You would rather sell your blood than give it up! What did that Vivienne offer you to make you so compliant?"

Kaitlyn gasped for breath. "She helped me! Of course, I'd give it to her. Why would I give it to someone like you, a high and mighty venomous woman?"

"You're asking for it!" Something in Victoria's pain was triggered. Her grip on Kaitlyn's neck tightened incrementally. Just as Victoria almost lost her sanity and was about to strangle Kaitlyn, Walter whispered in her ear, "Madam, this isn't wise."

Victoria's rationality was pulled back at the sound of Walter's voice. Her eyes bore into Kaitlyn's, trying to discern if she spoke the truth. Seeing Kaitlyn's composed expression, she knew it was true.

She slowly released her grip and then turned to Tyler, her voice cold, "Tell me, did you really give it to Vivienne?"

Tyler nodded. "Yes! She gave us this villa and promised to protect us here in Rivenwood. Kaitlyn gave her the recipe because of that."

Victoria's face turned ashen with rage. She glared at Kaitlyn, teeth gritted. "Well played!"

Then, to Walter, she said, "Let's go!"

Walter gently let Amelia go, which caught Kaitlyn by surprise. She had thought he would just drop her daughter.

Soon, the sound of a car engine was heard outside, and only when Victoria was truly gone did Kaitlyn breathe a sigh of relief. She quickly pulled out her cell phone and called Vivienne. But after several tries, there was no answer.

On the third ring, the mechanical voice on the other end made Kaitlyn turn to Tyler with worry, "Do you think Ms. Hawthorn can really handle Victoria?"

She rubbed her hands nervously, pacing the room, "Victoria's family, the Abernathy family, is one of the top five families. Even the bigwigs give them respect. Could Ms. Hawthorn possibly..."

Tyler, dizzy from her pacing, shared her concern, "Don't worry. Ms. Hawthorn herself said if Victoria came knocking, we should tell her the true location of the recipe. She must have a way to deal with Victoria."

Kaitlyn understood this logic. Remembering Victoria's expression when she left, Kaitlyn shivered, "Do you think Ms. Hawthorn is already facing off with Victoria?"

Tyler shook his head, indicating his ignorance. "Stop worrying. I heard Anna say Ms. Hawthorn is married into the Ellington family. You've heard of the Ellingtons, right? Even the Abernathys, with all their power, can't touch her."

Meanwhile, at Percival's apartment.

Vivienne and Percival had just escaped the pressing family demands and were catching their breath on the bed when the phone buzzed on the table.

Vivienne nudged Percival, "Mr. Wolf, could you check who texted?"

Percival rubbed his eyes, sat up, and saw the names. His handsome brow furrowed slightly, "Samantha, that woman, is she from another planet? She was just at CK Penitentiary this morning, and now she's in Northway City?"

"Samantha?" Vivienne was particularly sensitive to the name of the female F-Poison. She jumped up and moved next to Percival.

The message from Matthew was clear and concise. She glanced at it and quickly stood up, "Let's go; I need to get in touch with my people now."

"Where to?" Percival asked, smiling as he pulled her back.

"To Northway City, to meet my old adversary," Vivienne said just as her phone buzzed again. She paused, a strange number sitting in her inbox, [Kaitlyn.]

What the heck?

With her mother still unconscious, who was playing these games now?

"What's wrong?" Percival, sensing her unease, dropped his smile.

His eyes landed on the message on Vivienne's phone, and in an instant, his cold eyes flickered, "It seems they're quite worried about us being idle over there."

Vivienne laughed coldly, pulling back the hand that was on the doorknob, "Then let's play along."

Vivienne was done lounging about; it was time to hit the showers and unwind for the night.

Suddenly, something clicked in her mind, halting her steps. She around to face Renoivel, What did Undle2uke say to you when we left the Perez family's place today?"

Percival's posture stiffened, a flicker of something odd crossing his eyes.

Scooping Vivienne up, he carried her to the bathroom and gently set bey down in the bathtyby @a ished sTpAllBdx trom is pocket, his expression an indecipherable mix of amusement and something else, "He gave me this."

Vivienne's gaze darted to the box, instantly heating up at the sight of the familiar logo. Birth control? Her own uncle gave her husband birth control? What the heck?

While Vivienne was still processing, Percival slipped into the tub, his pricey suit carelessly peeled off and tossed aside. The sound of running water filled the bathroom.

Her white sundress was thoroughly soaked through, clinging to her curves, the fabric turning nearly transparent with the wetness.

At the back, her pink lace lingerie was fully on display for Percival's eyes.

The man who had intended to wait until their wedding day to fully consummate their relationship had completely abandoned that thought once the feast began.

He opened the box, "Uncle Luke said he knows what we've been up to. Told me to be careful, to make sure I don't let my own pleasure make his darling niece suffer."

Looking at Percival's muscle outlines, Vivienne's cheeks were aflame.

Her eyes widened, her dare to try and enticing, making Percival's throat tighten with desire.

The sound of a zipper was somewhat muffled by the water, but to Percival, it might as well have been right next to his ear, compelling him to move closer.

Just as he leaned in, a slender finger pressed against his chest, "Mr. Wolf, slow down there. You haven't told me what you think."

"Me?"

Chapter 730

Percival's lips curled into a smile, his eyes twinkling like stars in the night sky.

The divine beauty of Vivienne's face, akin to a masterpiece carved by the gods themselves, made even someone like her—who prided herself on being no stranger to handsome men and beautiful women—pause in sheer admiration.

She belonged to him, and the fierce surge of possessiveness that rose from the depths of her heart quickly spread to her eyes.

Unabashed by her desire, Vivienne discarded her drenched dress. Her pale arms wrapped around Percival's neck. "What's so funny?" she asked, her voice sultry.

Percival's gaze flickered. "I've already shared my thoughts," he said. "Now's not the time, so we have to... postpone 'it' a bit longer."

Vivienne rolled her eyes internally. Who was really being put out here? "You're not worried about Kaitlyn?" Percival asked just before their lips met, voicing the final question of the night. Before Vivienne could respond, the sound of labored breaths filled the steamy bathroom, spreading throughout.

As her mind hazed over, she thought she heard her phone ring. But then she was pulled into a sea of desire by Percival, all thoughts forgotten.

At the Hawthorn residence, the clock struck midnight.

Dorian sat up in bed, sleep nowhere in sight. His gaze then shifted to the emails on his laptop, feeling as if a boulder weighed heavy on his chest, making it hard to breathe.

[By tomorrow, I want to see that Hawthorn Group has terminated the endorsement deal with Kala.]

He had been on edge for days, and those few words made his heart tremble once again.

He opened and closed Vivienne's contact on his phone, looking years older all of a sudden.

The once gentle and resilient eyes were now filled with weariness.

After a while, a long sigh echoed through the empty room.

What was he supposed to do now?

The next day.

Vivienne and Percival were determined not to follow the path laid out for them, which suddenly left them with plenty of time. Seizing the opportunity, they decided to visit the Hawthorn residence with Leopold in tow.

"Seriously, Percival, with all the cars in your garage, do I really have to play chauffeur?" Leopold complained as he followed Vivienne into the house. He'd been up late with Griffin the night before and had barely hit the pillow when Vivienne's call came through.

He didn't dare ignore Vivienne's orders. Before he knew it, he was waiting in his car beneath the couple's apartment building. Percival was unrepentant. "Got a problem with that?"

"Nope, no problem at all," Leopold replied, shaking his head like a tambourine. "Besides, I've got nothing else going on except for hanging out with Griffin lately."

Percival stopped in his tracks and glanced back at him. "What? You're on suspension?"

"No way!" Leopold nearly jumped. "The War God is on a mission to root out corruption in the Vanguard Agency. Right now, anyone not assigned to an important person is basically on house arrest. Micah and Vance, too. The ones with assignments get their orders directly from the War God."

As he spoke, something else came to mind. "Oh, and Thomas tried calling you yesterday. Said he couldn't reach you. He asked me to tell you that they've found Huxley."

Percival nodded in acknowledgment. "I've already arranged for him to be taken back to the Boyd family." "Back to the Boyd family?" Leopold didn't understand. Wasn't that the same as letting the tiger return to the mountain? Percival hummed in response, apparently not inclined to explain, and followed Vivienne upstairs.



"Dorian? Cordelia?" Vivienne called out several times, both upstairs and downstairs, but received no response, which soured her mood.

She had tried calling that morning with no answer and wouldn't have come over if it weren't for the lack of news from Hawthorn Group.

If she didn't find anyone soon, she was ready to call on the Order of Nine Mystics Society to search the city. Soon, Vivienne reached the master bedroom on the second floor and pushed open the door. Seeing the person inside, she paused, "Dorian, why didn't you answer when I called?"

Dorian sat at his desk, impeccably dressed in a suit and tie, ready to walk out the door at a moment's notice, yet he was just sitting there, typing away at the computer.

"Hm?" Dorian looked up, seeming to just now hear Vivienne's voice. "Vivienne, what brings you here?" Vivienne's clear eyes noticed the fine sweat on Dorian's forehead.

She glanced at the air conditioner blowing above and spoke softly, "I called you yesterday, and you didn't pick up, so I came to check on you. Are you hot? It's 79 degrees outside, and you have the air conditioning on?"

"I, uh, just worked out a bit. Got a little hot, so I turned it on to cool down," Dorian said, loosening his tie.

Being naturally honest, he was terrible at lying.

Percival entered the room behind Vivienne and merely glanced around before turning to whisper something in Leopold's ear, causing a shift in his demeanor.

A pang of anxiety hit Dorian, but before he could ask, they were already looking at each other. He signed "ala NSr stand around hefe. Let's go to the living room. You and Astrid are both so busy, and it's rare for you to be together. What would you like for lunch? I'll make it."

Vivienne's gaze remained fixed on Dorian. "You decide, I'm good with anything." After a pause, she glanced back into the room. "Where's Cordelia? Did you send her on a business trip?"

"Oh, right!" Dorian hesitated for a second before answering, "There's a lot to do with the company just starting, so I had her go take care of some things."

The father and daughter made their way downstairs, where Leopold re-entered from outside, giving Percival a confirming look.

Percival wrapped his arm around Vivienne unabashedly in front of Dorian. "Dorian why; dohS yots Some stay wath for a while? Vivienne and I have some free time since Cordelia's out of town, and Vivienne is worried about you."

Under normal circumstances, Dorian, the doting father, would have frowned upon seeing such intimacy between the two.

But today, his mind seemed elsewhere, distracted.

Seeing Percival's gesture, a wistful look that others found perplexing passed fleetingly across Dorian's eyes.

Vivienne pursed her lips and spoke before Dorian could muster his usual resistance. "Is there something you're not telling me?"

Almost reflexively, Dorian's gaze

snapped to Vivienne, and he

shook his head. "No; what

could possibly be hiding from you?"

I'm fine, really. Both of you..." Please

read the original content at

NovelDrama.Org.

"Dorian, the surveillance equipment in the house has been temporarily disabled. Rest assured, no one will overhear what you're saying right now."

Leopold thought Dorian was still in denial, perhaps worried about the security devices in the villa, and reassured him in a gentle voice.

Unexpectedly, as soon as Leopold finished speaking, Dorian's expression turned grave. "You're saying the cameras in the house are down?"

Startled by Dorian's sudden ferocity, Leopold stepped back. "Yes, Dorian, you..."

Before he could finish, Dorian bolted, shooting out of the room like an arrow. "Cordelia!"