

## **Million-Dollar 731**

### Chapter 731

As Dorian's panicked shout pierced the air, Vivienne and the others snapped to attention. Rushing to the doorway, they caught up to Dorian just as he was bolting towards the garage.

"Whoa, hold up, cowboy!" Leopold grabbed Dorian's arm. "We'll drive you. Where to?" "The hospital! Step on it, to Downtown Medical Center!"

His voice was raw with urgency, his fingers quivering like aspen leaves in the wind. He looked like a kid who'd lost his favorite toy, eyes red and swollen with the threat of tears.

Only now did Vivienne notice the change in Dorian, whom she hadn't seen in a few days. Silver streaks had begun to weave into his hair like frost creeping over autumn leaves.

Her eyes lingered on him for a moment before cold realization dawned upon her. She remembered Cordelia's mysterious disappearance, and her expression turned to stone.

"Leopold, floor it!" she ordered.

Percival was already on the phone with Thomas. "Get the guys closest to Downtown Medical Center on it, pronto! Find a patient named Cordelia Wilson. And make it snappy!"

They managed to shave the usual half-hour drive down to mere minutes.

Upon reaching the hospital lobby, Thomas was already there waiting. Dorian didn't need guidance; he punched the elevator button and headed straight for the wards.

"What's the situation?" Vivienne asked, with Percival and the others close on her heels. Percival glanced at Thomas, lowering his voice as he asked.

Thomas shook his head, hinting at grim news. "No idea when she was admitted, but I've got people digging into it. As for the poison in her system, only Vivienne," he nodded at Vivienne, "can likely deal with that."

The elevator wasn't big enough to contain the tension. Everyone heard Thomas's words, including Vivienne, who turned a sharp gaze back to Dorian.

She wanted to interrogate him, but the words halted at her lips.

When they reached Cordelia's room, which was already guarded by their own, Dorian burst in. Seeing Cordelia resting peacefully, a semblance of calm washed over his distraught features.

Grasping Cordelia's hand tightly, tears began to cascade down his cheeks.

Cordelia lay on the hospital bed, her complexion ghostly pale, her lips devoid of color. Her usually gentle eyes were shut tightly, as if bearing an immense pain, her eyelids fluttering in a futile attempt to awaken.

Vivienne's face darkened, and she strode forward. "Dorian, let me handle this."

With a single look, Percival and Leopold helped separate Dorian from Cordelia.

Vivienne's slender fingers touched Cordelia's wrist, and the longer she felt the pulse, the graver her expression became. "Vivienne, how is she?" he asked, voice laced with dread yet clinging to a sliver of hope.

Vivienne's expression was icy as she interrogated him. "Cordelia was poisoned. Why didn't you tell me? Who has been in contact with you?"

Her anger was palpable. She couldn't bear to think what might have happened if she hadn't come today. Cordelia could've been left to die!

Percival caught the shift in Dorian's demeanor after Vivienne spoke, his face turning ashen. "Is Cordelia's poisoning that bad?" Vivienne gritted her teeth. "Bad? If I were any later, the Hawthorn family would be planning a funeral tomorrow!" "How could this happen?" Dorian slumped, muttering to himself in disbelief, "They promised to leave Cordelia out of this..."

"Uncle Dorian, what's going on?" Leopold asked, puzzled. With a daughter like Vivienne, so fierce and capable, what could possibly be so dire that it led to this?

Percival was equally baffled, standing alongside Vivienne. If he didn't know better, he'd think the broken man before them was an imposter, not the Dorian they knew.

"I was helpless," Dorian sobbed, covering his face as tears seeped through his fingers. "They said if I informed Vivienne or Astrid about Cordelia, they'd kill her on the spot. Just last week, they ambushed her on her grocery run, drugged her, took her to this hospital, and then called me. They said they had surveillance all over the house, including bugs. If I reached out to Vivienne or Astrid, Cordelia would be dead."

His voice broke with the weight of his helplessness. "They knew everything; they were always one step ahead. They told me which room Cordelia was in and made me watch her suffer, powerless to do anything. I didn't know what to do!"

Despite knowing Vivienne's extraordinary nature, resembling her mother's, Dorian couldn't help but feel overwhelmed by this shadowy organization that seemed omnipresent.

Especially when they used Cordelia to threaten him. Dorian was in a state of panic, unable to think clearly, and did as they commanded.

Vivienne took a deep breath and pressed on. "What do they want you to do?"

"I don't know their endgame," Dorian shook his head. "They only ordered me to make Ramona the face of Hawthorn Perfumes Inc. and to follow their every command. Oh, and yesterday, they told me to break the contract with Kala."

He pulled out his phone, showing Vivienne the emails. Feeling a weight lift from his chest, he said, "I've been stalling, didn't send out the tweet. Vivienne, can you save Cordelia?"

Vivienne reassured him, "Don't worry. I'll save Cordelia. Trust me." Leopold, having heard everything, exclaimed in disbelief, "What the hell does this puppet master want? All this for a starlet?" Thomas was equally puzzled. "Who exactly is this Ramona?"

Percival glanced at the email before him and let out a derisive snort. "Thomas, look in this I Big &° everything you can on Ramona. If she thinks she can stir the pot, she better have the chops to back it up!"

In a villa somewhere in Northway City. This was the second time in as many days that Samantha's bliss had been interrupted by the woman in red.

Had she not known that this woman shared a last name with the man from last night, she might have thought she was the man's wife and come to catch them in the act.

"What on earth do you want?" Samantha demanded. She was clad in a slinky nightgown, her fair and tender skin exposed to the air.

She lounged lazily on a red velvet sofa, its rich color making her appear all the more enticing.

The woman in red raised an eyebrow, her eyes filled with interest as they moved from Samantha to the impeccably dressed man. "Samantha, you do take good care of yourself. You're a good few years my senior, and yet you look so young. Even my high and mighty nephew is smitten with you, indeed shows some skill."

Samantha didn't seem to mind her age being pointed out. She smiled and said, "You're for the? Grimshaw. You're not Brain eae me. Anyone who didn't know better would take you for Ethan's sister."

It had been a surprise for her. The man she had randomly taken to her bed had such a significant background. The head family of an ancient warrior lineage. The second son of the Grimshaw family, Ethan Grimshaw!

All she knew was that his last name was Grimshaw, and his first name was a mystery. She had never expected him to from the scion of the ancient warrior lineages.

## Chapter 732

Ethan's elder brother, Asher Grimshaw, stood next in line to inherit the Grimshaw family's legacy as the patriarch.

Ethan seemed to be immersed in the world of medicine, but in truth, he was running errands for their aunt in the family business. Together, they were consumed with the quest for an elixir of eternal youth.

It was likely no coincidence that Samantha had met Ethan; it reeked of the Grimshaws' machinations.

But this suited her just fine. She had grown weary of simple emotional entanglements; in this world, the strongest bonds were those forged by mutual benefit.

Pausing, she smirked and said, "You don't expect me to help you research the elixir of eternal youth, do you?"

Her question sounded more like a statement.

Ms. Grimshaw chuckled softly, not denying it. "Have you considered it?"

Her icy gaze slid toward Ethan. "After all, my dear nephew has done so much for you. And the outside world is not so kind." Samantha knew she referred to Vivienne and Percival's crowd, along with the Vanguard Agency.

After a recent clash, GTO was scattered, and without the support of the Grimshaw family, Samantha knew she'd be a sitting duck if she dared show her face.

Ms. Grimshaw was not merely suggesting; she was cornering Samantha into an agreement.

With a coy smile, Samantha straightened her dress and sat up. "Well, when you put it that way, | can hardly refuse such generous hospitality. We've been collaborators for so long; what's one more day?"

It was true that they had been collaborators. After all, Ethan's resources had always been at her disposal.

Samantha prided herself on being a master of timing. "Moreover, any resources | still command will be at your disposal."

Days later, at a quaint café, the aroma of coffee filled the air as Arthur took a sip from his cup. "Cut to the chase; I'm short on time."

Victoria looked up hesitantly. "Kaitlyn said that the item has been taken by Vivienne. | can't find her now." "Vivienne again?" Arthur frowned, "She refuses to hand it over?"

Victoria shook her head, conflicted, "No, it's like she's avoiding me on purpose. I've been staking out her usual routes home, even to the hospital. I'm always one step behind, and even when | wait at Kaitlyn's, Vivienne seems to have a sixth sense, canceling at the last minute."

By the end, Victoria's expression held a hint of frustration. "I've run out of options, so | had to come to you."

The more Arthur listened, the tighter his brow furrowed. "You want me to intervene? That's out of the question; it would blow our cover."

"But..." If she didn't find a solution soon, she feared for her mother's wellbeing.

If it weren't for this plan, she would have already thrown herself at Percival's mercy. She didn't believe that Richard Ellington could stand idly by while his daughter faced danger.

Arthur raised an eyebrow. "Just go to Richard directly; he'll help you."

Victoria was puzzled. “Really? Wasn't it you who told me to keep a low profile and avoid contact with the Ellingtons? And now you suggest otherwise?”

Arthur left without explaining, leaving behind a cryptic, “The time is right,” before walking away.

Victoria watched his retreating figure, mumbling, “What time is right? Why is the War God so cryptic today?”

Meanwhile, at Kaitlyn’s villa. After treating Tyler, Vivienne was about to leave when Kaitlyn hesitated, “Vivienne, about Victoria...” “She came by again yesterday?” Vivienne wasn’t surprised by what Kaitlyn was hinting at.

Kaitlyn nodded with an embarrassed smile, “Maybe you should just give the item back to me. I’m scared she'll lose patience and come after you.”

Vivienne was unfazed, “Don’t worry. If I give it back to you, we'll truly be out of options. As long as I have it, Victoria will have to wait. I’m busy lately and can’t deal with her, but I'll talk to her in a couple of days.”

Kaitlyn was concerned, remembering her own troubles with Victoria. “But what if Victoria Abernathy doesn’t want to wait?”

In Kaitlyn's impression, Victoria was never the patient type. Otherwise, their family wouldn't have ended up that way before Vivienne's arrival.

Vivienne reassured her with a confident glance that always seemed to work magic, “Trust me, I'll be fine.”

After a little more conversation, Vivienne left Kaitlyn’s villa.

Recently, the GTO underlings had been causing trouble, as if they had lost their minds, causing chaos everywhere. Although they were just small fry who had been hiding in the wilderness, their abilities were not to be underestimated. Vivienne and Percival were stretched thin, dealing with them.

Finally, they remembered Huxley, who was locked away at the Boyd family estate.

At the Boyd Estate.

In the dead of night, when all surrounding homes were dark, the Boyd house was ablaze with light.

"Let me out!"

"Let me out, Vivienne! Percival! You have no right to hold me; I'll charge you with false imprisonment! Let me out!"

At the end of the upstairs hallway, Huxley's screams had been going on for days, seemingly without exhaustion.

His voice was hoarse from shouting, but like clockwork, he resumed his daily hollering from within the confines of his room.

Flanking his door stood two burly bouncers clad in black, rolling eyes at the farcical antics and what felt like every day preceding it.

They were utterly fed up.

One of them, prone to a shorter fuse, rapped on Huxley's door with force, "Zip it! Keep it up, and I swear I'll chuck you out the window!"

"Alright, alright," came a weary surrender.

The other bouncer, pulling his partner back, said, "Cut him some slack, will ya? The guy's a relative of Percival, even if his screws are a bit loose."



Percival and Vivienne were due for an interrogation session the next day. This was the last night of their watch; they just had to endure a little longer.

Seeing his threat had silenced Huxley, the irate bouncer shook

the tension, "T ic guys tivirg Me nung. exh \gérina be a wreck after this. I'll have a word with the boss - | deserve an extra drumstick for this gig!"

His colleague gave a noncommittal nod, euueine 0 researc" Tope aierattns re all that were | in the wake of unfulfilled hopes for a pay raise.

"Crack!" Suddenly, darkness enveloped their vision. Instinctively, the first bouncer clicked on the flashlight clipped to his belt and assumed a defensive stance, "Show yourself!"

The second bouncer mirrored the movement, his sharp gaze sweeping the surroundings like a hawk.

## Chapter 733

The grand manor was now cloaked in darkness, save for the small pool of light at their feet, where the beam of a flashlight fought back the shadows. The two of them had been standing there in a defensive stance for what felt like an eternity, half an hour at least, while silence reigned supreme.

Other than the sound of their own breathing, not a single sign of trouble pierced the quiet. The burly bodyguard, whom the staff called "Bulldog," scowled, "Damn it, what's going on? Is this just a freaking blackout?"

The possibility of Huxley attempting an escape was laughable. From the moment he'd returned, the Boyd Estate had been locked down tighter than Alcatraz. Mara, the pampered heiress, always had a bodyguard tailing her. Trying to slip away under these circumstances? It would take a Houdini, not a Huxley.

The second bodyguard, known as "Hawk" for his keen eyes, slowly relaxed his stance but remained on high alert. "No idea," he muttered before pulling out his radio.

"Team three, report in. We've got an electrical issue in the manor. Send someone to check the fuse box. | refuse to believe that in a place this swanky, we'd just happen to run into a stroke of bad luck."

In the darkness, Mara crouched at the corner of the hallway, her eyes fixed on the only illuminated spot in the villa. She bit her lip in frustration. She had managed to sabotage the lighting system, and yet these goons weren't budging. How was she supposed to rescue Huxley if they wouldn't leave their post?

Her palms pressed against the wallpaper, her manicured nails inadvertently scratching it, producing a faint, telltale noise.

"What was that?" Hawk, with his acute hearing, picked up on the slight disturbance. In the hush that surrounded them, it might as well have been a siren. At his prompt, the chandelier above flickered back to life.

In the renewed glow, Huxley looked up, his chapped lips twisting into a sardonic smile. "Idiots."

Outside, Mara was oblivious to his reaction. As the lights flared, her hiding spot was exposed, and the bodyguards downstairs spotted her without even needing to look up.

Bulldog locked eyes with her. "Ms. Boyd, what are you doing here?"

His piercing gaze made her sweat, and she fumbled with her fingers. "I... | got scared! The power went out, and | didn't dare stay alone, so | came out to check..."

She batted her eyes, the picture of innocence.

The two bodyguards exchanged a glance, skeptical but bound by orders from Thomas to only keep an eye on Huxley. With no harm done, they decided not to complicate matters further.

"The power's back now, Ms. Boyd. You should return to your room," Bulldog said, without a shred of warmth, his arm outstretched and his eyes commanding.

Mara barely spared him a glance before averting her eyes and scampering back to her room, cursing under her breath at the insensible oaf.

The next day, as Vivienne and her entourage approached the manor near noon, Mara burst out of the house, desperation in her voice. "Percival, why have you taken so long to come?"

She hurled herself towards him like a live grenade, expecting her cousin to catch her. Percival, however, stepped back, taking Vivienne with him.

Thud!

Mara hit the ground hard, her fall breaking the morning calm.

Anna, following Vivienne, couldn't help but laugh at the sight of Mara sprawled on the ground.

The scattered laughter of the onlookers filled the air as Mara lay there, indecision written all over her face. Eventually, she pushed herself up, "Percival, you're finally here. If you hadn't come, my brother would've been tormented to death by your wife."

"What's that got to do with me?" Vivienne asked, genuinely confused.

Mara glared at Anna, still giggling, and wiped away the tears that had sprung from the pain. "You may not like my brother and me, but you've drugged us, and now you've locked him up. This is an infringement of his rights!"

Anna scoffed, "Rights? Ms. Boyd, did you ever go to school? Remember, we live in Veridia, not M State." Mara bit her lip. "Percival, look at them. It's illegal to detain my brother like this!" Vivienne had no patience for fools and looked to Percival for guidance.

He took his wife's hand, and Thomas stepped forward to pull Mara aside. "I ordered Huxley's detention. If you have a problem with that, go ahead and call the cops," he said coldly, then turned, escorting Vivienne into the manor.

Upstairs, Huxley finally saw someone other than his guards. "Percival, what right do you have to hold me? What have I done to deserve this?!"

As his voice rang with indignation, Mara rushed into the room, tears

streaming down her face. She stood protectively in front of her brother, her face smeared with tears and dirt, invoking a pitiable yet defiant beauty.

"You're doing this to your own family. How can you justify this to our ancestors?" she challenged, her voice trembling with anger and despair.

The sharp sound of a slap echoed in the room.

"Vivienne, what the hell?"

Vivienne had struck Mara, her patience finally wearing thin.

Percival looked on, unfazed, and held his wife's hand. "Next time, let me do it. You shouldn't dirty your hands on such nonsense."

Vivienne pulled out a napkin with deliberate calm, wiped her hands, and lifted her gaze to meet Natalie's. "Have you been living it up with the Boyds for so long that you've forgotten you're nothing more than my lab rat?"

Mara's body tensed, and a flicker of resentment passed through her eyes. She hadn't forgotten her status as Vivienne's experiment.

But it had been so long since Vivienne had done anything to her that she began to believe, maybe, just maybe, Vivienne had decided to let her be.

So, she gradually let the memories of her past fade and started enjoying

the privileged Ifecwitt the Entingtons, a iki as Just like old times with the Boyds~a carefree heiress without a worry in the world.

#### Chapter 734

Vivienne lifted a hand and gently tilted Mara's chin upward, her expression icy, "Do | need to remind you of the way your grandmother treated my mother-in-law? My mother-in-law was nothing but kind and generous to the Boyd family. What reason did she have to be ashamed in front of your grandma?"

Mara bit her lip hard, clearly struggling with resentment, "But you can't just take people! | admit | did wrong, and you used me as a guinea pig—that punishment | accept. But what did Huxley do? He was minding his own business at home, and you took him prisoner. How is that fair?"

Vivienne's face remained expressionless as she released Mara's chin and wiped her hands with a tissue. With a calm voice, she commanded, "Thomas, bring it in."

In no time, Thomas entered the room, carrying over his shoulder an android that was the spitting image of Huxley. With a thud, the robot was unceremoniously dumped on the floor, landing right next to Mara's feet.

The android's lifeless eyes stared directly at the siblings, sending Mara into a shriek of fear as she turned and buried herself in Huxley's embrace.

Huxley's face paled, his anger from days of captivity dissipating under Vivienne's icy gaze. It was as if he suddenly became aware of the gravity of his situation.

His face was ashen, and with trembling hands, he shielded Mara behind him. "What is this thing? Why does it look exactly like me?"

Vivienne locked eyes with him. "What? You don't recognize this 'thing'?"

"How could |?" Huxley retorted immediately, "Is this an android? Why would you make one that looks like me? Vivienne, look at me. I'm nothing compared to my sister; | have no chance against you—why can't you just leave me alone?"

The confusion and helplessness on his face did not seem feigned.

Anna believed she had encountered countless smooth-talking criminals and could often tell when they were lying—not always, but at least four times out of five.

But now, facing Huxley, she couldn't tell if he was lying at all.

Thomas, with a stern face, pulled out a news clipping that had been suppressed by the higher-ups. "Mr. Boyd, even if you haven't seen this android, you should recognize this news story. You don't know about the android?"

Huxley hesitated, "Should I?"

Percival's cold gaze shifted, his foot resting on the android's head where there was a hole. "This android was found in my mother-in-law's hospital room. Huxley, that's quite bold of you, isn't it? Messing with my mother-in-law, eh?"

Panic surged in Huxley's heart as he realized Percival seemed convinced the android was his doing!

His hands clenched into fists as he scrambled to think of a way to talk himself out of this.

Mara couldn't even bear to look in that direction.

Her hands clutched Huxley's clothes tightly, her eyes flickering with nervousness and ferocity buried in Huxley's chest. Damn it!

What the hell were they planning?!

Huxley was a mess; what could he possibly do that was so heinous?

They must be looking for an excuse to get rid of them, too!

She wouldn't let them succeed!

Mara's gaze suddenly sharpened as she tentatively stepped out from Huxley's embrace, "What if someone deliberately made it to look like Huxley? He was kidnapped and taken to M State before—who knows what they did with him there? Percival, Vivienne, we're family, after all. Huxley doesn't even know what Vivienne's mother looks like. How could he possibly send such a thing to harm her?"

She spoke with a soft, analytical tone.

Vivienne and Percival shared a look, their eyebrows raised as if they were actually considering Mara's argument, nodding for her to continue.

Their near-affirmative gestures bolstered Mara's courage. Huxley's frantic heart also dared to hope as he straightened up a bit.

Still, he didn't speak, simply standing there trembling, watching Mara step in front of him again, "You've seen what he's like—so timid he wouldn't even harm a chicken. Besides, if he really wanted to harm your mother, why would he send an android that looks just like himself? Even a fool wouldn't do such a thing."

Mara didn't notice the fleeting stiffness in Huxley's body as she finished speaking. Vivienne did, and a dark glint flashed in her beautiful eyes.

"That does make some sense," she said at last, her lips curving into a smile for the first time, "Mr. Boyd, what have you got to say?"

Caught off guard, Huxley stammered, "I—I think my sister is right. Vivienne, is it possible there's a mole in your operation? After all, only those on the inside would know your mother's location, and I— don't have the skills to create an android."

At his words, Vivienne's smile bloomed like a poisonous poppy, chilling to the bone.

After a moment, she reined in her smile and tossed the tissue she had used into the trash, speaking calmly, "Then it seems we have an internal issue to deal with, Mr. Wolf. We'd better investigate thoroughly."

Percival's austere face remained impassive, his hawk-like Scioitt on Huxle hjs voioaded an rough, Yee SC investigate thoroughly. We can't be wronging my cousin, now can we?"

Vivienne's lips curled slightly, looking at Huxley. "You rest up. We'll go find out who's digging their own grave!"

For some reason, even though they seemed to believe him, Huxley felt increasingly anxious.

He had a feeling that Vivienne and Percival were hinting at something, that there was some unknown danger awaiting him. Lost in his thoughts, Huxley didn't notice Vivienne and Percival had already left the mansion.

When he came back to his senses, only Mara remained by his side, and even the bodyguards who had been watching him were gone.

"Huxley!" Mara suddenly exploded in anger, glaring at him with a thunderous expression, "What in the world are you hiding from me? Do you want to scare me to death?"

Her hatred for Vivienne had never ceased for a moment, but her concern for Huxley was genuine. He was her brother, and she couldn't just stand by and watch him get into trouble right before her eyes.

Huxley cast a glance at Mara, and suddenly, an idea sparked in his mind. He grabbed heehegd a urggnoy niswdide tense "Sis, we can't just sit around and wait for the axe to fall. If we stay here, it's only a matter of time before they come for us!"

Mara winced from his tight grip and yanked her hand back, exasperated, "! know we can't keen celts likes! | bu watch WeGo? The Boyd family has fallen, my old connections are gone, and now it's just the two of us. Here, under the roof of the Ellingtons, we're at their mercy."



"No! There's a chance for us!" Huxley insisted. Mara paused, puzzled, "What chance?"

"If we can orchestrate a change of leadership within the Ellington family, we won't have to live under anyone's thumb anymore," Huxley's eyes glinted with a dark determination.

Mara looked at him in disbelief, "Are you out of your mind? The Ellingtons are Rivenwood's most influential family. You think toppling them is going to be easy?"

"Just trust me, I have a plan. When the time comes, all I need is for you to back me up," Huxley's plans made his heart race with anticipation.

## Chapter 735

Ronald had just tackled a thorny issue at work when he arrived home. Pushing open the front door, he barely managed to call out for Kala when he noticed several people sitting in his living room. His heart skipped a beat. "Vivienne, Mr. Ellington, what brings you here? Is there some news about Kala?"

As his brain caught up, he exhaled in relief.

Carrying his briefcase over, Kala handed him a glass of water while Carl, who had finally gotten a chance to come home, had pushed aside a piping hot breakfast for the gathering.

Vivienne observed everything with a knowing look. She realized Ronald must have already filled Carl in. The remaining three Brooks siblings were now, at least, living together harmoniously.

"I just came to check in, no big deal," she said, tapping the armrest of the sofa and tilting her chin towards the android in the corner.

Almost immediately, Ronald's relaxed demeanor shifted, "Vivienne, believe me, I've destroyed all those things. Not one left!" At this point, Kala also spoke in defense of Ronald, "Vivienne, is there some kind of misunderstanding?"

Kala had been asking this since Thomas came in carrying that thing, but Vivienne had refused to explain until Ronald returned, and Kala was left with no choice but to wait.

Seeing Ronald's anxious expression, Carl commented dryly, "Vivienne, I admit my brother was a jerk before. But he had his reasons, and look at him now, fighting so hard to live. That thing over there, it can't be his doing."

There was an unexpected unity among them.

Vivienne raised an eyebrow, innocently spreading her hands, "Who said it was his doing? Why the panic?"

The Brooks trio exchanged looks, their expressions screaming that they were expecting some sort of interrogation. Percival watched with an amused grin as Vivienne teased the Brooks siblings, his eyes filled with indulgence.

Thomas and Anna, standing by, were torn between calling out Vivienne's wicked sense of humor or laughing at the Brooks siblings' baffled looks.

Rubbing her temples, Vivienne said with a sigh, "I was just bored and thought I'd drop by."

Ronald, Carl, and Kala were silent for a few seconds before Kala spoke up, "Do you even believe that yourself?" Vivienne sighed. "Am I that unbelievable?"

"What do you think?"

Ever since the Brooks family's crisis, Vivienne's visits had been rare, and each one heralded some impending issue. Her claim to just be visiting, especially with an android in tow, was met with disbelief.

Vivienne pressed her lips together, clearly not expecting to be disbelieved. "Okay, fine, I do have something to tell you." At her words, the siblings tensed up instantly.

Speechless, Vivienne looked at Ronald and said, "Lauren wants to see you."

Ronald stood abruptly, his face a mix of shock and hope. "Really?"

Carl and Kala were both surprised. "Who's Lauren?" they asked simultaneously.

A hint of redness appeared on Ronald's face at their question. He had never told his family about Lauren. Thus, he coughed awkwardly and said to them, "I'll explain in the future."

Then, he turned to Vivienne. "Vivienne, does Lauren really want to see me? When and where? Is it just to meet, or is something wrong? Should I..."

He was clearly overwhelmed by the prospect of seeing Lauren.

"She wants to meet you tomorrow at noon at the café," Vivienne said, trying to maintain patience. "She didn't say why. Just ask her yourself."

Ronald bit his lip, then looked up determinedly, "Why wouldn't she contact me directly?" Was she trying to distance herself from him? Vivienne's gaze darkened slightly, "You'll find out when you get there."

With a heavy heart, Ronald watched as Vivienne left the Brooks house, nonchalantly scanning the surroundings before getting into a car with Percival.

"To the Edwards family?" he heard her say. "The Edwards family?" Percival echoed in confusion. "Aren't we going for lunch first?"

Vivienne shook her head, "Vance Edwards has gotten wind of my mom being targeted. They want a word with me, so it can't be helped."

Percival chuckled. "So those incessant calls yesterday were from them? Well, let's skip that. What are you in the mood for? I'll take you out."

If it weren't for those guys yesterday, he would have been so close to taking a bath with Vivienne! They thought they could call Vivienne back to question her? No way!

Their meal, however, was interrupted by a phone call. Vivienne frowned at the unknown number but answered anyway. Victoria's brash voice came through, "Vivienne, I'm warning you, hand over the secret formula, or Kaitlyn gets it!" Vivienne paused mid-bite. "Let me hear Kaitlyn's voice."

"I'm not negotiating!" Victoria's voice choked up, then grew louder, "If you don't believe me, call the Littletons right now!"

Her voice was ice-cold, "Kaitlyn is in my grasp, and if you don't want her to end up in a body bag, hand over the goods within the hour!"

"Send me the address." Vivienne watched as her meal was getting cold and had no patience to continue the conversation with Victoria.

Dropping her phone with a click, she turned to Percival and said, "I'll be right back" as she

left

one to keep an eye on her discreetly."

Percival hadn't caught the details of the other side's conversation. Regardless, he had no objections to Vivienne's request. After he assigned Thomas to arrange backup, he asked, "What's going on?"

Vivienne spoke between bites of a meal, "Victoria says she's

Kaitlyn. When (ack wie) Spent he He? \she wouldn't allow it. Who knows what she's up to? What are your people saying?"

Tracing Kaitlyn's location wasn't tough.

Within two minutes of Percival's instructions, his contact replied, "Kaitlyn's at the suburban mall, and my people are on their way there."

Who conducts a kidnapping handoff at a mall? Relieved by the news, Vivienne found her forkful of braised meat even more succulent. Percival adored watching her let her guard down, showing a little girl-like vulnerability.

He kept feeding her, only occasionally stealing a bite for himself.

In a dilapidated warehouse on the outskirts of Rivenwood. With a slap, Victoria crushed a mosquito feasting on her leg.

Her irritation was as clear as day on her face. The tin pestered her, reseeded her anxiety. "What's taking so long? That damn Vivienne—she better not have gotten herself killed on the way here!"

## Chapter 736

Walter scratched his itchy chin, his voice tinged with hesitation, "Miss, maybe we should just head back."

Vivienne, that woman was sharp as a tack.

Even if she hadn't sniffed out the oddities, Percival surely would have.

Walter couldn't fathom what Victoria was thinking.

To just drop Kaitlyn off at the suburban mall and then drag herself here to suffer — it was like setting herself up to be stood up. As Walter silently grumbled, he dared not voice his true thoughts aloud.

Victoria was running out of patience.

It was getting late into the afternoon, and still, no one had shown up, which led her to bellow in frustration, "Looks like we've got no choice but to go with plan B. We're not waiting any longer! Let's get out of here and deal with Vivienne later!"

The next day, at the Linklater residence. Arthur had been tied up with business at the Vanguard Agency, and it was a rare moment for him to be home. Yorick was taking his siesta, and he hadn't allowed anyone to disturb him.

Ascending the stairs alone, Arthur pushed open the door to his father's room and saw him reclining in his rocking chair, eyes closed in repose.

Dracon was seated beside him, but at the sound of the door, he looked up. Upon seeing Arthur, he quickly masked his irritation with deference and approached quietly, "Art..." Arthur raised his hand to silence him, "Dad's resting. Keep it down."

Dracon's eyes flickered with impatience, but he nodded respectfully and tiptoed back to his father's side, his hands fidgeting behind his back.

The moment Arthur's gaze landed on his father, his eyes darkened, "Didn't you say over the phone that Dad's recovery was going well? This doesn't look right to me."

In the sunlight, Yorick's complexion was so pale it was almost translucent. His lips were chapped, and his once full cheeks were now sunken.

He looked even more frail than when he had first awakened from surgery, as if he could pass away at any moment. Arthur could only tell by the faint breathing that the old man was still clinging to life.

Dracon was both envious and fearful of his elder brother.

Faced with Arthur's probing, sweat beaded on Dracon's forehead. "Arthur, I didn't mean to keep things from you. It's Dad; he didn't want to distract you or Hector from your work, so he told me not to tell you."

His expression was one of helpless regret. "If you ask me, Dad's just been too soft on Percival. He thinks the guy wouldn't hurt him, but you never can tell what's going on inside someone's head. And his wife, she was finally acknowledged by the Brooks family, only to see them fall into ruin soon after. I've heard rumors that she wasn't exactly innocent in that debacle. If Percival would marry such a woman, what does that say about him?"

As Dracon raised his eyes to gauge Arthur's unreadable reaction, he continued, "It was after taking the supplements Percival

brought that Dad got poisoned. Now, his condition's been worsening day by day. I'm afraid only a Specter Healer can save him

now. "Specter Healer?"

Catching Arthur's interest, Dracon let a barely detectable smile flicker across his face, "Yes, but this person is elusive; not just anyone can find them. I'm just worried... I'm worried that Dad might not last until then."

The fact that Vivienne was the Specter Healer was a closely guarded secret within the Linklater family, a secret Dracon had sealed tightly.

Arthur, known as the War God of Veridia, would surely have the means to persuade Vivienne to help.

Of course, Dracon knew that if Arthur tried to strong-arm her, Vivienne might not be so amenable. It was the perfect scenario for Dracon to sit back and watch the two of them duke it out for his own benefit.

"Arthur, I think we should take Percival into custody. He administered the poison, so he must have the antidote!" Dracon rambled on.

Arthur's eyes flashed imperceptibly, "I will have someone search for the Specter Healer. As for Dad, a professional caregiver will be arriving in a few days to look after him. You can take some time to rest."

"What?"

Dracon had expected Arthur to be difficult to deceive but had not expected to be sidelined, "Arthur, don't you trust me? I know I'm the black sheep of the family. I've never made anyone proud. All my sisters have their achievements, and I'm the only one who's fallen short. But I've been with Dad for years. No one knows his condition better than I do. Bringing in a stranger all of a sudden... I'm afraid Dad won't take well to it."

Their conversation had been long enough to rouse Yorick from his deep slumber.

Blinking awake, his cloudy eyes swept over Dracon with an inscrutable look, "I agree with your brother. You need a break; go rest for a while."

"Dad!"

Arthur spoke in a low tone, "Dracon, step outside for a moment. Dad and I have things to discuss. You can come back later."

In her apartment, Vivienne finally had a moment to herself.

Percival had gone out early to deal with the Ellington family business, leaving with Richard for the office. She had hoped to catch up on some much-needed sleep.

Just as she was drifting off, the doorbell jarringly rang. Annoyed, she rose from her bed, her hair a tangled mess, and trudged to the door with a face full of sleep-induced irritation. Anna was startled by Vivienne's disgruntled appearance. "I'm sorry, Vivienne. Is this a bad time?"

Aaron, quick to spot the love bites hidden beneath Vivienne's raven hair, blinked with understanding, "Vivienne, please don't tell me you were just now getting to bed?"

He nudged Anna through the door. "Not to be rude, but you've got it to Percival. Look at Basa circles under your eyes; it breaks my heart to see them. Doesn't he care at all?"



Vivienne couldn't care less about the idle chatter. "Alright, you two, what's the real reason you're here?" She plopped down on the couch with all the grace of a sack of potatoes, sprawling out as if posing for a bad painting.

Aaron, seeing her distress, immediately started playing the butler, fixing her up with fresh fruit and serving her fresh fruit with the kind of zeal usually reserved for tending to a revered family matriarch.

Anna couldn't help but smirk. "When the cat's away, the mice will play," she thought to herself. It was clear as day that Aaron was trying to muscle in on Percival's turf.

But meddling in their affairs wasn't Anna's style. She silently observed the scene, surreptitiously texting Percival to hint at Aaron's impromptu visit.

Seeing Vivienne, who had finally perked up and sat up straight under Aaron's overzealous stare, Vivienne, who just wanted to ask about Soren's injury. When's he going to be fully recovered?"

Caught in the crosshairs of Vivienne's suddenly inquisitive gaze, Anna's face turned a shade of crimson.

"Why—why are you staring at me like that?" she stammered.

## Chapter 737

Vivienne's eyes crinkled with mirth, "Soren's injuries still have yet to recover?"

Anna replied with a soft concern, "It's healed, mostly. But the spot where the shrapnel hit him, it flares up whenever there's a storm brewing. Ms. Vivienne, do you know of any remedy that could help him fully recover?"

"Sure do," Vivienne said, her eyes gleaming with mischief as if she were privy to some juicy gossip. "But why are you asking on his behalf? Let him come to me. Treatment needs to be personalized, doesn't it? How can I offer advice without seeing the patient himself?"

At Vivienne's words, Anna's cheeks flushed a deeper shade of red. "I—I wanted him to come, but he's a bit reluctant. He's scared of Percival, and then there's the matter of..."

Her voice trailed off, growing fainter and fainter as if she were grappling with how to articulate her thoughts. Her eyes were a tumultuous sea of turmoil and embarrassment.

Vivienne's curiosity piqued even further. She had never seen Anna so flustered before.

Aaron, ever blunt and without reservations, blurted out, "Vivienne, let me fill you in. It's all Kenneth's fault. Lately, that boy's been acting like a lovesick puppy, shadowing Anna every chance he gets."

It wasn't just his clinginess that was the issue. The guy had been laying on the charm thick, using the most cringeworthy pick-up lines imaginable.

He'd gone all out on his confession to Anna; Aaron counted off on his fingers, "He started off with the classic—candlelit dinners, red roses, pretty standard. But then he went off the deep end with those heart-shaped music boxes, you know, the ones with glittery rainbow colors and Anna's picture plastered all over them. And the cacti? Don't even get me started, and then there was that snow globe..."

Vivienne listened, her face contorting with second-hand embarrassment.

She tried to maintain a straight face, but her twitching lips betrayed her. She had little hope that Aaron's storytelling was going to improve.

Aaron opened his mouth, then burst into laughter, "You should've seen it, Vivienne. That snow globe—it had a tiny figurine of Kenneth inside, and when you shook it, it would play 'Eye of the Tiger' and the little guy would start dancing. Hilarious!"

Atiny figurine, singing 'Eye of the Tiger'?

And dancing?

Vivienne pictured the scene and looked at Anna with a mix of sympathy and amusement. "You've had it rough..." Anna couldn't even muster a smile. She had kept silent for fear of this very embarrassment.

While Vivienne managed to hold back her laughter, Aaron had already had his fill of amusement back at school.

Now, he was laughing uncontrollably. Anna held back her impulse to slap Aaron and said, seething, "Go on, laugh. Let's see if you can keep laughing when Percival comes back later."

She was frustrated! Kenneth was the one doing all those embarrassing things, yet she was the one who was embarrassed!

Aaron was having the laugh of his life, and he didn't fully grasp Anna's threat. "So what? You think I'm scared of you? Or do you... Wait, who's coming back?"

His laughter ceased abruptly, turning into a hiccup, "Percival's out dealing with business, isn't he? Why would he be back so soon? Did you message him?"

A barrage of questions tumbled out of Aaron before Anna could respond.

Seeing the smug look on her face, Aaron realized the truth, his handsome features momentarily crumbling. "Oh, you're good, Anna. Here I was, being all nice, bringing you to Vivienne, and this is how you repay me? You traitor, you've betrayed the cause!"

"Who said we were ever on the same side?!" Anna retorted. She turned to Vivienne, "Ms. Vivienne, you tasked me with protecting him, and now that GTO is nearly dismantled, can I finally consider my mission complete?"

Vivienne cocked her head, her face a picture of bewilderment. "Didn't I tell you? That assignment was over ages ago. I thought you'd already rejoined the team. To think you were still at school..."

"Over? I could have left?" Anna's triumph froze on her lips. "But you never told me that." She could have left already?

Had she known this sooner, she wouldn't have wasted her time with Kenneth at school! And she wouldn't have accrued such a mortifying history!

Catching the regret on Anna's face, Vivienne opened her mouth, then turned away guiltily; she had indeed forgotten to inform her.

There had been so much to handle since returning.

It had only been today that she found a moment to catch her breath, and by then, she had completely forgotten about Anna's situation.

The room fell into an awkward silence.

Finally, unable to withstand the tension, Aaron sidled up to Vivienne, "Say, Vivienne, I've been meaning to ask—can I join your organization?"

"Nope." Vivienne didn't hesitate to refuse, "Stick to your studies. Isn't being an E-sports champion @Xalgh fonyou Beaded the Miller family needs you to hold down the fort. Don't get caught up in every wild scheme that crosses your mind."

"Just his type wouldn't even pass the Vanguard Agency's entrance tests."

The sudden sound of the door swinging open turned their heads. Percival stood there, an imposing figure with a stern gaze fixed on Aaron, clearly displeased.

Aaron bristled defensively. "What's wrong with me joining? I'm the head of the Miller family now. If Anna can join, why can't I?"

Vivienne smirked. "Because you can't beat Anna in a fight. Quit dreaming and stay out of trouble."

At the Abernathy estate. As Victoria stepped into the grand foyer, her eyes instantly met Gavin's, who sat with an air of authority at the head of the room.

Harrison stood by his side while Sophie took her place at the lower head of the table to his right, all three pairs of eyes bearing down on Victoria with palpable disdain.

"Really, what is this, a Spanish Inquisition?" Victoria quipped, her gaze sweeping the room with a mocking smile.

Gavin's stern expression flickered. "Where are the things I asked you to fetch? It's been ages since I've seen a properly run household. A family of the frail and ill, and you can't even handle one woman? What use do I have for you?!"

Victoria snorted with laughter. "How should I know what use I am to you? Dad, be reasonable. You're the one who forced me into doing your dirty work. When did I ever claim I could pull it off without a hitch?"

She spun around and took the seat of honor on the left. "Kaitlyn is a member of an ancient Wal-Mart line,

lineage, for heaven's Sake. If she wants to part with her

belongings, what am I supposed to do? Besides, I did everything by your playbook. If it's not working out, maybe the fault lies in your methods, not with me!"

"Victoria!" Harrison frowned and rebuked her. "Is that any way to speak to Dad? He's just asking; there's no need for such an outburst!"

Chapter 738

Victoria rolled her eyes at Gavin, her voice thick with defiance. "I'm talking to my dad; what's it to you?"

Gavin slammed his hand on the table, his voice booming. "Victoria! You're getting completely out of line. Harrison is your husband, a member of this family. Look at yourself; what kind of attitude is that?"

| asked you to handle things because it's for the good of our family! No respect for your elders, gallivanting about all day—what have you learned? Can't even handle this simple task. It's embarrassing to even admit to our acquaintances that you're my daughter!"

Sophie twirled a lock of her blonde hair, sashaying towards Gavin in an attempt to calm him. "Daddy, please, don't be angry."

Then she turned to Victoria with a smirk. "Sis, you're really out of line. Dad's just trying to check in on your progress. After all, dealing with that Kaitlyn has been dragging on forever."

Her smile was coy and suggestive. "You always seem to have plenty of tricks up your sleeve when it comes to dealing with me and my mom. How come none of them work outside? Don't tell me you're taking pity on Kaitlyn and dragging your feet on purpose?"

"Shut up!" Victoria's gaze was icy. "I'm talking to Dad. What right do you, a bastard, have to interrupt? The Abernathy family's main hall has, for generations, been a place for legitimate heirs and their offspring. Sophie Abernasy, a woman who can't even claim her place in the Abernathy family tree and clings to the name for the sake of its sound—who gave you the audacity to stand here and squawk at me?"

"You!" Sophie's face flushed a deep purple, "Dad, look at her! How can she speak to me like this? I—I'm just looking out for her. The deadline we promised the Grimshaw family is nearly upon us. If we can't deliver the recipe, we'll be in trouble. The Grimshaws have far more influence and wealth; how can our family stand against them?"

Sophie's face bore a striking resemblance to her mother, especially in her pretentious and affected mannerisms.

Victoria felt sick just looking at her, and Harrison, witnessing the scene, couldn't help but frown.

Gavin, having loved that woman for over a decade, watched his daughters clash with a dark scowl on his face. "Victoria, kneel!" Victoria clenched her fists, her eyes fierce. "And if I refuse?"

Gavin's eyes, murky and venomous as a snake in the dark, hissed, "Refuse? Guards! Today, I beat you till you kneel! "

He had indeed been too lenient with Victoria lately! His daughter, just like her mother, was stubborn to the bone!

Back in the day, her mother, flaunting her status as an Ellington heiress, had humiliated him time and again. His affection for her had been utterly worn down to nothing!

And now, Victoria dared to mimic her mother's rebellious stance!

The audacity!

At his command, two of the Abernathy family guards stepped forward, their voices stern.

They charged towards Victoria, intent on bringing her to heel.

Walter, standing to the side, would not let them near, fighting two against one, determined to protect Victoria.

Sophie knelt with one knee before Gavin, sneaking glances at Victoria, a malicious glee shining in her eyes, wishing she could mar her sister's face.

Seemingly unsettled by Victoria's defiant gaze, Sophie clung to Gavin as if frightened. "Daddy, her bodyguard is so fierce. He won't come and hit me, will he?"

"He wouldn't dare!" Gavin was livid with his unruly daughter! He glared at Walter, his voice cold and menacing. "Walter, don't forget whom you serve. I employed you to protect my daughter, not to join her rebellion."

Walter bowed his head, a barely noticeable flash in his eyes. He murmured, "I have not forgotten who raised me, sir. But if I am to protect Ms. Victoria, that is precisely what I shall do. My duty is to guard her, and if she is threatened, I must ensure her safety."

"You!"

Gavin was furious, ready to explode, but Harrison, who had been silent, casually glanced at Sophie, defusing the tension. "Dad, Victoria just spoke out of turn; that's just her nature. You know that. She is your legitimate daughter, the only child listed in our family registry. Frankly, the future of the Abernathy family will rest on her shoulders."

Harrison was in Gavin's good graces, but his relationship with Victoria, his biological daughter, was not quite the same. Without a son of his own, Gavin had taken to grooming Harrison as his successor.

And Harrison knew how to speak. With a few words, he had calmed the storm brewing in the old man's heart, which had been set on disciplining Victoria moments before. "Both of you, enough."

Sophie was not satisfied, glaring at Harrison. What was so special about Victoria that everyone seemed to side with her? Wasn't it commonly said that Harrison didn't even like Victoria? Yet today, he was speaking up for her!

Harrison didn't give a second thought to her glare. When he saw Gavin nodding along to his words, he — "You know, Kaitlyn ON) nanegs aoters copy of yours. Both of you have that unyielding spirit. They say a camel on its last legs is still larger than a horse, and Kaitlyn, as the last surviving member of the ancient warrior lineage of the Littleton family, deserves a bit more time. I believe in her; she'll make it."

Deep down, he really couldn't stand Victoria. But to the world, she was still his wife. Having her kneel because of an illegitimate daughter was not only a slap in Victoria's face but his own as well!

How could he stand for that?

Watching the two burly bodyguards back down, Victoria shot Harrison a surprised glance, and her lips twitched. However, she didn't voice the 'thank you' that teetered on the edge of her tongue.



It wasn't that she felt awkward; it was simply the wrong place and time.

Sophie was far from willing to let matters rest. Clinging to Gavin's thigh, she cooed, "Harrison, you! ayaa being too har eynysisThe O Lypweten Fatily is such a minnow; who knows if their secret recipe is even legit? | say we look for another solution. I've heard that the heir to the Grimshaw estate is still single. Daddy, your daughter is willing to ease your worries."

"Sophie, what kind of daydreams are you having?" Victoria knew this woman had no shame, but she hadn't expected her to stoop this low, "Do you think the Grimshaw heir is a trash can that takes in anything and anyone?"

Out of sight, Sophie's resentful gaze lingered on Victoria for a split second before she turned neers Gavia)! resfing nerBedd oh is thigh with feigned fragility, "Daddy, did you hear what she said? I'm just trying to help her lighten the load, and she speaks to me like this?"

## Chapter 739

Gavin's eyes flashed a warning as he glanced at Victoria, "Since we've given our word to the Grimshaws, we can't break it. Otherwise, it doesn't matter how many times you've visited them—it won't do any good."

He signaled to Harrison, who immediately stepped forward to help Sophie up, "Miss Sophie, Victoria speaks her mind. Don't take offense. Better get up from the floor—it's cold, and you wouldn't want to catch a chill. Dad would be worried sick."

"Get lost—I don't need your help."

Sophie shook off Harrison's hand with a defiant look. She wasn't foolish.

Wasn't Harrison's remark just a blatant admission that Victoria was right?

Everyone looked down on her, including her own father, who always claimed to love her the most! Was it just because Victoria held the title of the legitimate daughter?

If it weren't for her mother's relentless pursuit, that status should have rightfully been hers!

Biting her lower lip in frustration, she said, "Dad, I was just trying to help. Victoria's been trying to get something from Kaitlyn for ages with no results. I thought I'd go to Mr. Grimshaw myself to buy her some time, so if she comes up empty-handed, at least the Grimshaws won't blame us."

"With you?" Victoria scoffed from her perch, legs crossed leisurely. "Ridiculous. Dad, don't worry. I'll retrieve the item before the deadline. And when I do, you better not forget what you promised."

Gavin's expression shifted, "That's if you can actually get it." "What did you promise Victoria, Dad?" Sophie's mind raced with the possibility of it being something like the Abernathy estate.

She spun around anxiously, "How about I give you a suggestion, sis? Even if Kaitlyn is tough, her entourage is nothing but dead weight. Why don't we send more people to snatch her daughter? She'll have to hand over the recipe then."

And then, Sophie could sabotage it all from the shadows! Victoria would completely lose their father's trust!

She rambled on, oblivious to the changing expressions of the others. Especially Gavin, who couldn't believe his daughter, usually as meek as a lamb, could suggest something so sinister.

He was stunned for a moment before he exploded in anger under Harrison's and Victoria's gleeful gaze, "How dare you! I've spoiled you rotten to the point where you've forgotten the very concept of legality!"

Kidnapping Kaitlyn's daughter? The audacity of such a thought!

Victoria tucked her tousled hair behind her ear. "You should've taken your studies seriously, but you chose to play with pigs instead. Sophie, have you ever read the criminal code? Do you realize kidnapping a child lands you behind bars? I'm seriously questioning whether you're a mole sent by our enemies, just waiting to hand them a victory on a silver platter. Or maybe you're just tired of wearing jade bracelets and fancy a pair of handcuffs instead?"

Harrison said nothing. His gaze on Sophie was indistinguishable from that of someone observing a complete fool. Intellect, evidently, wasn't something everyone possessed.

If the situation were as simple as she described, they wouldn't have had to go to such lengths to torment the Littletons. Absurd.

"|, |..." Sophie was on the verge of tears, "Dad, I'm sorry. | was just talking nonsense. Please believe me; | really just wanted to help. We could just scare her a little, not actually have Victoria do anything."

Seeing her still not giving up, Victoria stood up and approached her, "Enough with your little act."

She glanced at Sophie dismissively, then turned to Gavin. "Dad, to be honest, Kaitlyn doesn't have the recipe anymore. It's now in the hands of Vivienne. This woman is the heiress of the Ellingtons, Percival's wife. You know what | mean?"

Gavin was instantly alert, "What? Kaitlyn handed it over to Percival's wife?" How could he not know Percival? The beloved nephew of that woman! Richard's most cherished grandson.

He had played the fool for years, but over the past few, with misfortunes befalling the main and secondary branches of the Ellingtons, Percival had taken the reins.

Any perceptive person could see the reach of Percival's influence. And his wife, no doubt, was no ordinary woman. With the item in their possession, reclaiming it would be a formidable challenge.

After a long pause, Gavin looked at Victoria, instructing, "You're his cousin, and you've never been in touch before. If you could reconnect, get close to him, perhaps you could trick that recipe out of Vivienne?"

Victoria laughed—a mocking, hollow laugh.

She moved closer to Gavin, "Dad, are you losing your memory in your old age? Remember, my mom severed ties with the Ellingtons because of you. My grandfather and uncle reached out to her initially,

but she insisted on marrying you and staying with the Abernathys. Now, after everything that's happened to my mom, you expect me, her daughter, who's never been acknowledged by them, to come knocking on their door?"

Her smile was laced with scorn. "Do you think I have no pride?"

"You!" Gavin's face turned ashen.

Victoria gave him a sidelong glance, nonchalantly saying, "If you have the gall to approach the Ellingtons, be my guest, but don't expect me to do your bidding."

With that, she walked away, leaving a parting shot, "I'll find a way to get you but keep your daughter's cavorters provoke me even if I lose my mind one day and accidentally end her, that won't be pretty."

She didn't linger; she just stormed out, leaving Gavin fuming and Sophie seething with resentment. Harrison watched the drama unfold, his expression unreadable.

In the middle of the night, in Sophie's bedroom.

"What? That bitch had the nerve to say that to you?"

Sophie was nestled in the luxurious

embrace of her bed, leaning into her

mother's comforting as Thomas exuded an air of grace and

his cation that filled the room.

Sophie nodded meekly, "No, it's not

just that. | think Dad wants to bring

Victoria's mom back home to take

care of her." Please read the original

content at NovelDrama.Org.

The normally charming and lovely features of Sophie's face were marred by a sense of being wronged, prompting a surge of s Hae eavuel Madeline But yer Redrd the Bane face, weathered by time, twisted into a grimace of fury. "She wishes! That home-wrecker will never set foot in the Abernathy household again! Including the little bitch she brought into this world; they can all drop dead! No one will take what's mine or my daughter's!" She cursed inwardly

Meanwhile, in Vivienne and Percival's apartment, the couple was curled up on the sofa, engrossed in a horror movie.

As the bloodied, grotesque face of a woman lunged at the screen, Vivienne's phone suddenly rang, startling her despite her usual bravado.

Percival seized the moment. Before Vivienne could even move, he pulled her head close to his chest, "There, there, no need to be scared. I'm here, Vivienne, you're safe."

Vivienne could hardly breathe...

"Mr. Wolf, you can let go now."

The Novel will be updated first on this website. Come back and continue reading tomorrow, everyone!