

## Chapter 26 It's Millie Who's Blocking Your Way

App after app, Millie methodically scrolled through the music platforms on her phone.

Her curiosity led her to the search engine, where she discovered a dedicated Wikipedia page for the new release.

Vivian's name showed up in every spot. She was listed as the lyricist, the composer, and the performer.

A quiet laugh escaped Millie as she set her phone aside.

Vivian wasn't afraid to take risks and didn't try to hide it.

If there had been recent negotiations with Evans Entertainment, Charles would have found out immediately. He followed these things closely, and so did Millie.

Reality, however, told a different story. Vivian had never reached out.

With Charles' notoriously short temper and his zero tolerance for unfairness, there was no way he would have let this go unnoticed.

Had Vivian truly missed that point?

Maybe she just didn't care about Evans Entertainment's stance.

Perhaps she believed Brandon could fix anything that might come up.

Or, given that her days were numbered, she simply had nothing left to lose.

Lost in these questions, Millie suddenly heard a quiet snuffle beside her.

Turning, she caught sight of Barbara hastily dabbing at her cheeks with a tissue.

The moment Barbara noticed Millie looking, she explained, her voice breaking, "Gosh, I couldn't help it. This song just hit me so hard. Sorry, I didn't mean to compliment the competition so much... oh, right, Vivian's not a contestant. She's a guest judge. I'm all mixed up."

Crying had left the poor assistant flustered and a little embarrassed.

Millie couldn't help but find her adorable, so she offered another tissue, her voice gentle. "Don't worry about it. Honestly, I think the song is beautiful too."

After all, the music was her own creation to begin with.

A sense of relief washed over Barbara.

Onstage, Vivian's performance reached its end. Tears streaked her face as the cameras lingered, capturing a portrait of both vulnerability and strength.

A quick camera sweep brought the audience's attention straight to Brandon.

His seat had been carefully chosen, providing him with both an excellent view and a sense of seclusion.

Few people in the crowd had actually spotted him, despite the persistent rumors swirling about his attendance.

Yet the moment the broadcast panned away from the stage, Brandon's presence was impossible to miss.

A close-up filled the screen, capturing him in crisp detail.

Every part of him looked composed. His tailored suit showed off his slim frame, and not one movement gave away a hint of nerves. He carried himself with calm confidence and a kind of ease that didn't need any show.

Though his hands rested with casual ease, anyone watching closely might have caught a faint redness around his eyes, which could have been the lights or something more.

The reaction online was explosive, with messages and squeals filling the comments.

"Oh my god, it's really Mr. Watson!"

"There's something about Mr. Watson today. He looks more striking than usual."

"He never goes to these things! He's only here because of Vivian—if that's not love, what is?"

"Those red eyes say it all! Vivian's performance must have touched him deeply."

"I'm obsessed! Their romance is the stuff of dreams!"

"Millie, you can't hide anymore. Come and deal with this!"

...

A graceful bow from Vivian drew the audience's gaze back to the stage.

She brushed the tears away from her eyes, her features softening into something gentle and beautiful.

"Thank you all—especially that special someone in my life," Vivian whispered, her words directed both to the audience and to a certain someone she never named, her smile gentle but secretive.

"No matter how short my days may be, or how hard the road ahead gets, your presence makes me fearless," she remarked as the stage lights lifted, filling the space with a sense of hope.

Still wiping at his own tears, the host returned to center stage. "Vivian, that performance was incredible. The entire audience is moved! Can you tell us—who is that special someone you mentioned?"

Vivian's response was only a smile, her silence more telling than words, and the cameras lingered for a moment before cutting back to Brandon, letting the mystery linger in the air.

A few light words were exchanged before Vivian left the stage.

The spotlight soon shifted as contestants prepared for their performances.

With the first singer wrapping up, a call came for Millie to get ready.

Down the backstage hallway, Millie made her way forward and unexpectedly crossed paths with Vivian, who had just come from a conversation with Brandon in the audience and was heading backstage.

Their steps slowed as they neared one another.

"Serena," Vivian then called out, catching Millie's attention.

Millie's steps faltered for a brief moment as she glanced toward Vivian.

A bright smile played across Vivian's lips. "Did you enjoy it? My

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performance, I mean."

Soft laughter escaped Millie. "The song was wonderful."

Vivian's smile grew wider. "I believe my song should prove my talent to you."

Only a silent laugh came from Millie.

Words kept flowing from Vivian. "Later on, when teams are formed, would you consider joining mine?"

The day marked the premiere of the show, which introduced both contestants and judges to the audience and included a segment for forming teams.

Four contestants would be chosen by each of the three judges, with mutual selection taking place.

A question lingered on Millie's lips. "I have not even performed yet, and you are already offering? What if I ruin your team's chances?"

Vivian responded with confidence, "I expect you to pick me, since we share a common adversary." She stepped in, closing the space between them.

Her voice dropped as she leaned in and whispered, "Serena, have you ever wondered why you cannot be Charles' official girlfriend?"

A puzzled lift of Millie's brow revealed her confusion at Vivian's words.

Those words—"Charles' girlfriend"?

Was Vivian really talking about her?

Pleased with Millie's reaction, Vivian leaned back. "There is someone standing in your way."

A question came without hesitation. "Who?" Millie wanted to know what game Vivian was playing.

Vivian's smile grew wider as she slowly opened her mouth and said, "It's Millie Bennett. She's the one standing in your way."

Confusion filled Millie's eyes as she stared at Vivian, lost for words.

A quick adjustment of posture followed from Vivian. "You may doubt it now, but one day you will see that I am telling the truth."

As she prepared to leave, Vivian's gaze dropped pointedly to Millie's stomach and she spoke again. "It must be agony to lose a child, am I right?"

Vivian left those words hanging in the air and walked away, her silence cutting deeper than anything else.

Down the hall, staff members called out for Millie, urging her to hurry along, so she moved on without a backward glance.

A few paces later, Vivian glanced over her shoulder, her expression one of triumph as she watched Millie walk away.

Every bit of her timing was intentional.

She had carefully picked this very moment to reveal this "secret" to Serena.

The first goal was clear. Vivian wanted to cloud Serena's thoughts and make her falter on stage.

There had been no rehearsal attendance from Serena. Vivian could not judge the girl's talent, nor had she sent anyone to test her. Most likely, Serena did not even know the competition's rules.

The night was meant to be Vivian's triumph, and she was determined to shine brighter than anyone else.

A second reason burned beneath the surface. Vivian aimed to plant resentment for Millie in the heart of Serena, the woman Charles kept at his side but never made official.

Pain must have lingered from losing a child for Charles, only to remain unrecognized by him. Surely Serena must harbor suspicions or feel bitterness.


If any anger existed, Vivian wanted it aimed squarely at Millie.

Her goal was to use this woman as a weapon against Millie.

Thinking through each step, Vivian found no fault in her plan. A sense of satisfaction washed over her as she turned away and moved backstage.

At the end of the corridor, Millie paused, her eyes following Vivian's fading figure.

She kept silent.

< Chapter 26 It's Millie Who's Blocking Your Way  +120 Points at most

Elsewhere, in a dimly lit monitoring room, two people listened intently as the recording from the "Backstage Corridor" device played, their eyes round with shock.

A whisper broke the silence. "Do you think we should tell someone about this?"



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