

Million-Dollar 551

Chapter 551

Listening to Ronald's spiel, Vivienne felt a sting of insult to her intelligence.

Carl had a hematoma in his head?

And it was scattered by a bump?

Did they really think she would not know if there was a hematoma?

Vivienne downed the remnants of her wine, "Hand over Carl's rehab center address to me. I'll visit him after this busy spell is over. I can't let Faye turn into a widow, can I?"

Ronald looked at Vivienne, "Vivienne, I truly regret bothering you with this, asking you to go all that way..."

"Cut the nonsense, hand it over." Vivienne was visibly irked.

And to think she assumed Carl fell into a vegetative state for some grave reason, only to find out it was a mere bump on the head.

A hematoma, really? After the surgery she had performed, how could there possibly be a hematoma left in Carl's head?

Seeing Vivienne's genuine anger, Ronald quickly sent Carl's rehab center address to her, "Carl is

stable now, and he's got professional caretakers there. You don't have to worry."

"Alright, you guys carry on. I'm heading out." Vivienne was tired and, after a short farewell, went to find Percival for the ride home.

Darren and Ashley escorted Vivienne and her companion out.

"Boss, my mom said she's with my dad hosting guests, so they can't see you out. But she wanted me to give you this; she noticed you didn't eat much tonight. Have something to fill you up on the way home."

Darren now addressed Vivienne as Boss.

Darren handed over a bag filled with food lovingly prepared by Melissa.

"Thank Auntie for me," Vivienne said, taking the bag.

Then, Darren handed her an invitation, "But boss, looks like you owe a gift."

Vivienne looked at the invitation in surprise. "You're getting married? Did you notify the company?

Who's the bride? Are there any clauses in your latest contract requiring you to stay single? If you cost me a dime, I swear I'll wring your neck!"

Darren was the second hottest star in Rainbow Entertainment after Stephen. His sudden marriage was bound to cause a stir.

Vivienne was not against marriage, but it better not come out of her pocket!

Darren was speechless, feeling a chill at his neck. "Boss, could you at least read it before jumping to conclusions?"

Ashley chuckled. "Really. Even if my brother wanted to get married, he'd need someone willing first."

Vivienne opened the invitation to find it was a celebration of the billion-dollar success of Betrothed Understud.

The TV series had already aired!

"Stephen and my sister walked the red carpet today. They would have delivered this personally if they could. They've been working their tails off; many are shipping them for real now, boosting our company's revenue. Boss, don't you think you should give a generous gift?"

Vivienne nodded. "It's in a week, right? Okay, tell Kala I'll be there."

This was a chance for profit, not to be missed!

On the way back, Vivienne sent Carl's address to Draven.

[Check his doctor and condition.]

Draven responded quickly, and Vivienne turned off her phone.

The day's events had drained her. It was the first time a day that started with a strawberry cheesecake did not turn out to be as sweet.

Leaning back in the passenger seat, she turned to look at Percival. Under the dim light, his face was half-bathed in illumination, half-shrouded in darkness. The light accentuated his nose and spread across his lips, a golden veil upon his visage.

His hands, pale and slender, turned the steering wheel with an effortless grace.

As the turn signal clicked, a car's headlights flashed across Percival's profile, revealing a strikingly handsome side view that was hard to look away from.

Vivienne leaned closer, drawing a finger along his refined jawline.

Percival tilted his head, trapping her finger against his shoulder before quickly letting go.

"I'm driving. Stop it."

Vivienne laughed, her fingers playfully reaching for his ear. "Mr. Wolf, I've missed you."

Percival slammed on the brakes, pulling over to the side of the road and taking several deep breaths before restarting the car.

This girl was becoming more and more naughty.

At this rate, her mother would rise from the grave to battle him.

"Vivienne, stop it," Percival urged, not daring to look at her, focusing on driving instead.

Seeing he was not amused, Vivienne withdrew her hand and sat quietly.

Somehow, only when she was with Percival did her heart find peace.

Only by his side did she feel truly alive.

Before she knew it, Vivienne drifted off to sleep.

Percival parked beneath her home. Noticing Vivienne asleep, he did not rush to wake her.

In silence, he watched her as if all the world's beauty had settled in that moment.

His fingers gently caressed her cheek, playfully pinching her puffy face from deep sleep.

Once in her bedroom, Percival laid her gently on the bed. As he turned to leave, her sleeping grip tightened around his wrist.

"Mr. Wolf, stay with me," she murmured, her eyes flickering open with a glint of moisture.

His heart melted on the spot, like snow on the first day of spring. He perched on the edge of the bed,

gently closing her eyes with his hand. "Alright, I'll stay with you."

Vivienne slipped back into slumber, and Percival lay beside her, pulling her small frame into his

embrace. Updated at Drămanovels.com

He began to sing a lullaby by her ear softly.

It was Karen who had taught him that lullaby.

Vivienne was not nearly as peaceful then, a bundle of energy impossible to settle. So, he sang that

lullaby over and over until sleep finally claimed her.

Percival had been just a boy himself then, barely twelve or thirteen. Later, he realized that Karen had

been teaching him patience all along.

Percival held Vivienne a little tighter, gazing out the window as the silver moonlight spilled through.

"Mentor, where in the world are you?"

Chapter 552

A week later, at the celebration gala of Betrothed Understud's billion-dollar achievement.

Vivienne, the invisible power behind Rainbow Entertainment, chose to attend the party from the

shadows, in keeping with her elusive persona.

However, generous as ever, she gifted a whopping 30 million dollars as a bonus for the film's smashing success.

"Boss, we're talking a billion-dollar hit here! As the lead investor, Rainbow Entertainment is swimming in dough, and you only give out 30 million?" Darren quipped, balancing a parrot on his shoulder, always quick with a joke.

Vivienne had not seen this goofy bird in ages and actually missed it a bit. She reached out to pet it.

But the parrot, now plump and haughty from Darren's care, dodged her hand.

Raising an eyebrow, Vivienne retorted, "That 30 million is coming out of your bonus, Darren. Looks like your feathered friend there is going on a diet!"

The parrot squawked in protest. "Brat! Brat!"

That was the parrot's usual cry upon seeing Vivienne. Whenever it saw Finnian, it would call out, "Old Geezer!"

The parrot had a unique nickname for each disciple, earning it more than a few feather-plucking sessions at the hands of Leopold and the others.

Vivienne tapped the parrot's head. "Pretending you don't see me? You're asking for trouble."

"Boss, it's not my fault it's misbehaving; you can't dock that from my bonus! I've promised my mom I'd cut her off from my expenses. If I lose that bonus, I'll starve!" Darren pleaded.

Vivienne, pretending not to hear, ignored him completely.

That would teach him to be cheeky.

"Stirring up trouble with the boss again?" Kala sauntered over in a matching outfit with Stephen, the on-screen couple from the film.

The party was being streamed live, and the fans, especially those shipping the lead pair, would not miss it for the world.

As Darren often said, Kala and Stephen never missed a chance to fuel their fans' fantasies and boost sales.

"Help me out, Kala. I can't afford to lose that bonus!" Darren passed the parrot to her. "If you speak up for me, Birdie's yours."

Kala rolled her eyes. "Keep your dumb bird, and try picking a decent name for once."

Darren was notorious for his lack of creativity with names: the parrot was "Birdie," his sheepdog

"Pooch," and his American Shorthair "Kitty." He went straight to the essence of things.

Darren looked pleadingly at Stephen, who simply cupped his ears, "Sorry, bro. When it comes to the boss, my hands are tied."

Kala did not bother with the drama and instead whisked Vivienne away to chat.

"The studio's got a few scripts for me to consider. I want to pick carefully. The fame from this last project was hard-won, and once we wrap up, Stephen and my on-screen romance will end. So, I'm thinking my next role should be a solo act—what do you think?"

Vivienne never meddled in her employees' careers—as long as they made money, that was all that mattered to her.

Vivienne was unabashedly money-minded.

"Whatever works. Discuss it with your agent. As long as it brings in the cash, you have my blessing,"

Vivienne said, blinking away any pretense of not being a slave to the almighty dollar.

Suddenly, a gasp rippled through the crowd.

"Oh my God, it's Mr. Ellington! He just gifted 50 million—what a legend!"

Vivienne glanced over, her expression souring at Mr. Wolf's extravagance.

Though half of that donation would eventually land in her pocket, it seemed like taking wool from the sheep's back. She would need to school him on frugality later.

She was about to greet him when Darren's parrot burst into a frenzied chant, "Old Geezer! Old Geezer!"

That nickname was reserved for Finnian, whom the parrot would recognize by scent, no matter the disguise.

Vivienne spun around to see everyone marveling at the parrot while one figure quietly slipped away in the opposite direction.

Her fist clenched, and she called to Percival, "Catch him!"

Percival, clueless but obedient, gave chase.

Meanwhile, the parrot kept up its chant, driving Darren to muffle its beak. "Shut it, you dumb bird! There

is no old geezer here, just young men and ladies. Don't make enemies for me."

The parrot only squawked louder, and soon, Percival dragged back a man, but he turned out to just be

a crew member.

However, the next moment, all the crew members wearing the same uniform scattered in all directions.

Percival shrugged off his coat. "I'll bring the right guy back."

Vivienne stopped him. "No need. We have a bird."

"Huh?" Percival looked at Darren's parrot, confused. "That bird?"

Vivienne nodded with a smile. "Yes, this bird!"

She approached Darren, whispered to the parrot, and then let it loose. The bird flew into the crowd,

causing a stir as people dodged its path.

Darren cringed, aware of the live cameras. The headlines would surely read: [Darren brings pet bird to

gala, which suddenly goes berserk!]

"Boss, what did you tell that bird? It's gone mad!" Darren had never seen it act this way.

Vivienne settled back, sipping her drink, "Don't worry about it." New chapter available on

Dramanovels.com

With its sharp beak, the bird pecked aggressively at the man's scalp while squawking, "Old Geezer!"

Old Geezer!"

The man, who had been sipping his champagne with poise, now found himself in a frantic attempt to dodge the unexpected assault from Birdie.

And Vivienne? She had never run away from anything.

"Mr. Wolf, bring that man here," Vivienne commanded, cracking her knuckles, a glint of frost in her eyes.

Chapter 553

Without a word, Percival stepped forward and yanked the man being pecked at by the parakeet away from Birdie.

The man, powerless against the bird and certainly unable to resist Percival's grip, allowed himself to be escorted to the lounge.

"Old Geezer! Old Geezer!" The parrot squawked triumphantly upon reaching Vivienne, ceasing its pecking frenzy to perch atop the man's head, its tiny head held high in a display of pride as if to say:

"Praise me, come on, praise me!"

Fuming, the man plucked Birdie from his head and, gripping its neck, growled menacingly, "You dumb bird, I should've wrung your neck when I had the chance. You ungrateful creature, what made you

betray me this time?"

Flapping its wings in a futile attempt to escape, the parrot broke free and landed on Darren's shoulder.

"Chicken tenders, chicken tenders!" It chirped.

Chicken tenders were Birdie's favorite, and Darren had stocked up on them at home, dedicating half the freezer to the bird's preferred snack.

Pounding his fist in frustration, the man lamented, "All for some chicken tenders, Darren? After all these years, couldn't you have spoiled it with something fancier?"

The treacherous bird, selling him out for mere chicken tenders, just like that wretched girl!

Darren, still puzzled, asked, "Excuse me, sir, do we know each other?"

Percival, unfazed, stepped forward and ripped off the man's disguise, revealing his true face.

Darren nearly collapsed in shock.

It was Finnian, Vivienne's elusive mentor whom she had been hunting down for debts!

"Holy smokes! Finnian! Is that really you?"

Although Darren was a mere associate member of the mentorship, having fled the fold soon after

joining, Finnian was still his mentor.

Caught off guard by Percival's bold move, Finnian scrambled to cover his face with his elbow,

exclaiming, "Wrong guy, you've got the wrong guy!"

Vivienne gritted her teeth fiercely. "Finnian! Put your hands down!"

Everyone in the room, including Percival and Finnian, was taken aback.

Those familiar with Vivienne knew she was genuinely enraged.

Seeing his upset disciple, Finnian quickly tried to smooth things with a sycophantic smile. "You silly

lass, I was just pulling your leg. Why the long face?"

"Pulling my leg? You faked your death for this long, and you tell me it was a joke?" Vivienne stood up,

her eyes brimming with tears as she glared at Finnian.

Finnian, always fond of Vivienne, felt a pang of guilt seeing her cry and hurried to comfort her, "Oh, look

at you, shedding precious tears. I'm fine, see? Stop crying, and come check the injury that dumb bird

inflicted on me; it hurts like hell."

Vivienne sniffled, standing up to inspect Finnian's head, but to everyone's surprise, she suddenly burst

into heart-wrenching sobs.

"You lied again. You're not hurt at all!"

Finnian was in a fluster, pulling out tissues and wiping away tears while apologizing profusely, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry! Oh dear, I haven't seen you in a while, and you've become such a crybaby. Please, stop crying, be a good girl."

Darren was too shocked to utter a word.

Vivienne crying?

The merciless Vivienne, weeping uncontrollably?

Was this not entirely out of character?

Meanwhile, Percival lounged casually on the sofa, pulling out a piece of paper and scribbling a few lines before silently sliding it in front of Vivienne.

Finnian, too busy pacifying his disciple, paid no heed to Percival's action.

However, the weeping Vivienne suddenly grabbed Finnian's hand, sliced his finger just enough to draw blood, and pressed it onto the paper with such speed that Finnian was taken by surprise.

Vivienne stopped crying, softly kissed the paper, and flicked away her remaining tears. "Finnian, this is

what you owe me. Don't forget to pay up!"

Finnian, gobsmacked, looked closely at the document.

It was an IOU for 80 million dollars!

"You... you ungrateful girl, conspiring with this outsider to swindle my money!"

Vivienne pocketed the IOU, her face devoid of any sorrow, replaced by a sly and triumphant smirk.

"That's where you're wrong. Mr. Wolf here is my fiancé, not an outsider. And don't you think it's fair to add a little interest to that thousand dollars you've owed me for so long?"

Finnian pointed an accusing finger at Vivienne. "A thousand dollars... Just a thousand, and you've been fixated on it for years! And now you're charging me this outrageous interest, you ungrateful child!

Oh heavens, why don't you strike me down and save me from this ungrateful girl's treachery? Why is my life filled with such suffering!"

Vivienne ignored his dramatics, even taking the time to pour Finnian a glass of water so he would not get hoarse from all the shouting.

Percival watched the scene, reminded of his grandfather. It seemed that the older generation all fancied playing the mischievous old rascal.

Finnian then pointed an accusing finger at Percival. "You dare to collude with this ungrateful girl to steal

my money? You will never be welcomed into my home! I'll never approve of your marriage!"

Percival was momentarily taken aback but quickly recovered.

Placing Finnian's hand gently down, he smiled. "I'll pay that 80 million dollars for you."

Finnian's face-switching was so rapid that even Darren, seasoned in the acting world, had to applaud.

It appeared that Finnian had not wasted his time in solitary; his acting chops were as sharp as ever.

They were all performers at heart.

Percival smiled at Finnian, finally understanding where Vivienne got her mercenary nature.

Vivienne waved at Darren. "Go tell Kala I had to jet early, okay?"

Darren knew, without a doubt, that Vivienne needed a private chat with Finnian. Besides, he was no

longer Finnian's disciple anymore; it was not his place to eavesdrop. Content of DramaNovels.com

He left, his arms cradling Birdie, whose thoughts were probably all about chicken tenders, and

thoughtfully shut the lounge door tightly behind him.

Now, it was just Vivienne, Percival, and Finnian left in the lounge.

Vivienne's expression grew serious. "Finnian, don't you think you owe us an explanation?"

The day Finnian had unexpectedly kicked the bucket, they had wept as though their world had ended.

Vivienne, though not as overtly devastated as the other nine, had shed her share of tears, too.

"Come on, Vivienne, you know there was a good reason for all this," Finnian said, sipping his water.

After all the shouting, his throat was indeed parched.

Chapter 554

Vivienne stared at Finnian. It would be a lie to say she did not resent him.

The death of Finnian had been a thorn in her side for years, a constant reminder of what she perceived

as her medical incompetence. It gnawed at her, thinking that Finnian might still be walking the earth if

her skills had been just a notch higher.

For a long while, self-doubt had engulfed her, and she had shouldered the blame for Finnian's demise.

After all, apart from Karen, Finnian was the most significant person in her life. His loss had delivered a

crushing blow to her heart.

Finnian, sensing the weight of the moment, capitulated. "80 million is already a fortune. If it were 800

billion, it might just send me to an early grave!"

"Kid," Finnian began, with a weary shake of his head, "I was being hunted. I had no choice but to fake

death to escape. I didn't want to drag you all into this mess. It was a last resort." As he spoke, he rolled up his sleeve to reveal a long, ugly scar on his right forearm.

The scar was surrounded by dark tissue and was as deep as half a coin. It bore the hallmark of a specialized weapon—one laced with deadly poison.

Vivienne's eyes flashed with concern as she gently took Finnian's hand, inspecting the scar. "You've been poisoned, and you never told me? Do you have someone who can cure this?"

After a closer examination, she could see that, although the scar looked fierce, it was healing, and the black hue was the residual poison that no longer posed a threat to his life.

Finnian withdrew his arm and nodded. "Yeah, a master healer, a friend of mine. I'll introduce you someday."

Vivienne furrowed her brow. She was a medical prodigy known as the Specter Healer. Yet, she knew in her heart that this poison was beyond her ability to cure. There was someone with medical skills that surpassed hers in Veridia?

She did not consider herself the best in the world, but it struck her as odd that she had never heard of

such a proficient healer. And over the years, Finnian did not seem to have any friends.

The only person Finnian ever called a friend was her mother, and Vivienne had never met him even before her mother's passing. It was clear that even if Finnian had friends in the past, he no longer wished to associate with them.

Finnian, a man who would boast about a particularly intelligent parrot for weeks, would surely have mentioned such a formidable friend. Why the silence?

Caught by Vivienne's scrutinizing gaze, Finnian picked up his cup and took a sip to hide his discomfort.

"Why are you looking at me like that, you rascal?"

Snatching the cup from his hands, Vivienne pressed, "Who is this master healer friend of yours? And who's the one hunting you that you'd fake your death to escape? There can't be many who could corner you like this."

Finnian smacked his lips in exasperation. "You always were impatient. Let me explain. You've probably heard of the ones after me—they're from the ancient warrior lineage."

Vivienne and her brother Percival exchanged a startled glance. "The ancient warrior lineage?"

The only known families from the ancient warrior lineage were the Martinez and the Perez families. But

why would they be after Finnian?

"Finnian, are you being hunted by the Martinez or the Perez family?" Vivienne pressed.

Waving his hand, Finnian dismissed the notion. "Neither. There are many in the ancient warrior lineage, and in modern times, only the Martinez and the Perez families are known. But my feud has nothing to do with them. Don't worry about it. You should mingle as you please.

Especially the Perez family, they're good people. Don't resist getting to know them."

Vivienne narrowed her eyes. "You've been keeping tabs on me all along!"

Realizing he had let something slip, Finnian hastily changed the subject. "Don't go blabbing about seeing me to anyone, okay? Even though the ones after me aren't from the Martinez or Perez family, these ancient warrior lineages are interconnected. If they find out I'm alive, all my hiding would have been for nothing."

"I know." Vivienne breathed out, her mind swirling with questions about the ancient warrior lineage.

Leopold had once told her that these families were shrouded in secrecy, that a family that crossed them had vanished overnight. Yet, the Perez and Martinez families did not seem the type to carry out such

ruthless vendettas. Could there be factions within the ancient warrior lineage?

Who exactly was after Finnian?

But more pressing to Vivienne was the identity of the mysterious healer who had treated Finnian's wounds.

Finnian glanced at Vivienne and saw the curiosity burning in her eyes. He evaded her queries, fearing she would probe further.

However, Vivienne was not one to let go quickly. She slapped an IOU on the table, her voice firm. "Spill it. Who's treating your wounds?"

Finnian took another sip of water, trying to mask his unease. "You're relentless, kid. Like I said, I'll introduce you when the time is right. Until then, drop it. There are things you're better off not knowing."

Vivienne snatched the cup away from Finnian, denying him his sip. "Fine, don't tell me. But where are you living now? I'll move in with you."

"No way, no way," Finnian protested, waving his hands dismissively, "You're all grown up; a young lady shouldn't be shacking up with her old mentor. It's just not proper."

Vivienne's eyes narrowed, sensing the mystery healer must be sharing Finnian's living space.

“You’re getting on in years, and I need to look after you. If your place is too small, I’ve got plenty of space. You could move in with me,” Vivienne insisted, gripping Finnian’s wrist tightly, her bright eyes locking onto his without relenting.

Finnian struggled to free his arm. “Go live with your fiancé. I’m not moving.”

“That's not an option. If you don’t, Mr. Wolf’s eighty million is off the table!”

Finnian turned to Percival, who shrugged, saying, “In our family, Vivienne’s word is law.”

Percival just grinned broadly, finding the situation amusing.

Being henpecked was a badge of honor.

Leopold wished he was henpecked, but alas, he had no wife.

Vivienne quirked an eyebrow. “You know my real dad?”

Vivienne stood up briskly. “Let’s go. Right now.” Content belongs to Dramanovels.com

After leaving the lounge, Percival led them straight to one of the Ellington family’s vacant villas.

Finnian nodded in approval. “Hmm, which room is mine?”

Percival opened the door to a south-facing bedroom and said, “This one. You like it?”

Finnian scoped out the room and nodded. "Yeah, this is fine. Wait, why is it a suite?"

Percival chuckled. "I thought I'd bunk with you."

Finnian clicked his tongue. "What's the meaning of this? I want a different room!"

With that, Finnian strode out, opening the door to another room.

Chapter 555

As soon as the door swung open, there was Jerry, lounging on the couch with a contract in hand,

earbuds dangling from his ears, grinning at Finnian.

"Finnian, long time no see, buddy."

Finnian slammed the door shut, immediately storming into another bedroom.

Holy smokes, Larry was here! He was fiddling with a pocketknife, grinning ear to ear. "Hey Finnian,

missed me?"

Finnian had caught on by now. He stood at the door, taking deep breaths before bellowing, "You bunch

of troublemakers, get out here, now!"

Door after door opened, and everyone except Leopold lined up in front of Finnian.

Smiles were plastered on their faces, but their eyes were full of schemes.

Dawson burst out furiously, "Do you have any idea how much your funeral cost me? Pay up!"

Jerry looked genuinely baffled. "Finnian, what's with the fake death stunt? You're breaking our hearts."

Daniel, fists pumping in the air, yelled, "I ditched so much stuff to come back for your supposed passing, nearly got myself killed on the road!"

Eric, counting on his fingers with a sinister tone, added, "I almost blew myself up in the lab trying to figure out what killed you, and here you are, alive and kicking!"

Donald was grinding his teeth. "Fun to fake your death, huh? You know how long it took us to crawl out of the mental scar of your 'death'?"

Brian, frowning deeply, pointed outside to a husky tied up. "Finnian, you owe us an explanation."

Larry clenched his fist, threatening, "If you don't clear things up, I'm gonna let that dog tear up your vegetable patch on South Mountain."

Gary was livid at the mention of the vegetable patch, saying, "Those plants were my blood, sweat, and tears under the scorching 95-degree sun!"

The eight disciples surrounded Finnian like debt collectors from hell. Poor Finnian felt his brain swell.

Thank goodness little Leopold was not around, or his wailing would have pushed Finnian over the

edge!

Vivienne was relishing the drama downstairs, sipping red wine with a smirk.

She was not naive; Finnian agreeing to stay with her so easily meant he was planning a getaway.

She and Percival could not keep tabs on him alone, but now, with this crew...

"Let's see him try!" She thought.

Percival crept down silently, sitting next to Vivienne, casually draping an arm around her shoulders.

But the disciples upstairs, as if they had eyes in the back of their heads, glared down at Percival,

"Hands off her, now!"

Finnian, fists raised, egged them on. "Go on, my disciples, rescue Vivienne!"

"Finnian, you'd better explain yourself first!"

Finnian's raised fists sank once more.

Percival's hand not only stayed on Vivienne's shoulder but pulled her even closer.

"Where's Leopold?" Percival inquired.

Leaning on Percival's shoulder, Vivienne said with gravity, "He mentioned something about Vance

needing him."

Percival's brow furrowed slightly; it must be that mission Vance mentioned earlier.

After hearing Finnian out, Percival was convinced the ancient warrior lineage was deep waters indeed.

What was Vance plotting by sending Leopold into the thick of it?

Vivienne set down her wine glass, yawning. "Keep an eye on Finnian tonight. I'm hitting the hay."

"Will do, mission accepted," Percival assured, affectionately ruffling her hair before kissing her lips.

"Percival, get your lips back!" Came the chorus from the disciples upstairs.

Percival shrugged. "Keep an eye on Finnian. He's on the move."

Barely 10 feet out the door, Finnian's escape was blown by Percival's words, and the disciples were hot

on his heels, shouting for an explanation.

In despair, Finnian covered his ears. The karmic payback of his youth was coming to haunt him.

Why did he ever take on so many disciples?

Especially Vivienne!

That cunning girl had rallied other disciples, and now his life was on the line!

Utterly exasperated.

Plus, he could not poison his disciples, no matter how tempting it might be!

The eight of them nagged Finnian until the wee hours, starting with demands for payback and explanations, then sharing their hardships over the years, eventually insisting Finnian kick Percival out or else forgiveness was off the table.

Not until they ran out of steam and tears did they sprawl across the beds and floors, each clutching a piece of Finnian as they drifted into a heavy sleep.

None noticed the faint, strange scent in the air, deepening their slumber.

In the dead of night, Percival's eyes snapped open, covering his mouth and nose.

Being a night owl, he sensed the anomaly instantly and was on high alert.

He slipped out to check on Vivienne, who was sound asleep.

"Vivienne, wake up," he murmured, but she was out cold.

Frowning, Percival checked her breathing—steady. She was just asleep; no harm was done.

Relieved, he crept to the room where Finnian and the disciples were. Upon entering, he found them knocked out, sprawled across every surface, even the husky outside sleeping belly up.

But Finnian was gone.

Hearing a noise downstairs, Percival vaulted over the fence, landing silently on the first floor.

Sure enough, the previously locked window was flung wide open, the security system sabotaged.

This was supposedly the crème de la crème of security systems - so tight that not even a fly could buzz

its way out. Sabotaging it would be no small feat.

As it turned out, Finnian had some real tricks up his sleeve.

With that taunt, Finnian leaped down from his perch.

Luckily, Percival's reflexes were sharp. As one leg plunged into the pit, he vaulted forward with the

other, propelling himself out of the trap with a powerful leap.

But no sooner had he landed than a tingling sensation shot through his toes. Looking down, he realized

he had narrowly missed a live wire!

Anger flared within Percival.

This Finnian was playing for keeps. First a bomb, now a booby-trapped pit?

What deadly game was this?

Chapter 556

Percival casually snapped off a twig and flicked away the power line in his path. Thankfully, he was in

the garden; otherwise, he would have had to endure a jolt of electricity.

But Finnian's test was not something to be taken lightly.

No sooner had Percival tossed aside the twig than a snake, tongue flickering, shot towards him along the branch.

That did it. Percival was livid. He grabbed the snake by its body and slammed it to the ground.

But as he did, something felt off.

Why was this snake so light?

Frowning, he glanced back at the pit he had passed and the discarded power line.

He decided to shut his eyes, ignoring anything else he might touch or sense.

Thirty seconds later, Percival reached the garden fence. With a firm kick, the fence collapsed. Only then did he open his eyes and turn to see that there was neither pit nor snake—just projections from a high-tech projector!

Finnian possessed the same kind of cutting-edge projector that Karen had been researching!

Percival's gaze sharpened, and some thoughts in his mind were now confirmed beyond doubt.

The only problem was the lack of evidence.

Stepping over the fallen fence, he approached the villa's main gate.

With the delay, Finnian was long gone.

Percival exhaled a sigh of resignation. When Vivienne woke up, she was going to be furious.

He would have to think of a way to sweet-talk her.

As he was about to head back, he heard a loud noise behind him. It was Vivienne!

"Vivienne, you're awake," Percival exclaimed, relieved. If Vivienne was up, the eight still out cold would get an earful, not him.

Vivienne nodded. "A little trick like that won't fool me. Did you catch him?"

"No, Finnian was too fast. I couldn't keep up."

"That old fox. If I get my hands on him, I'll make him cough up 800 billion!" Vivienne said with a vengeful tone before slipping her arm through Percival's. "Mr. Wolf, let's head back."

Percival gave Vivienne a once-over. "Sure."

Back inside, Vivienne flopped onto the couch, half-sinking into it, and sighed, "After all that, I can't sleep. Mr. Wolf, let's have a drink."

Standing before her with a steady gaze, Percival agreed, "Alright."

Vivienne picked Percival's favorite whiskey from the cabinet and poured two glasses, her eyes

shimmering as she looked at him.

Holding out a glass, she stretched out her leg and hooked Percival's, her lips glistening in the dim light,

enticing beyond words.

"Mr. Wolf, do you want me to sit in your lap while we drink?"

Percival loosened his tie, revealing an attractive Adam's apple, and rolled up his sleeves with a

decisive motion. "Or maybe, drink lying down?"

Vivienne was startled, but in the next instant, Percival had flicked her leg aside, and his elbow came

down hard on her shoulder.

The glass fell and shattered, and Vivienne found herself pinned under Percival.

There was no hint of flirtation, only threat and vigilance.

"Talk, who the hell are you?"

'Vivienne' blinked, and her eyes quickly lost their luster, like a light suddenly snuffed out.

Percival was taken aback and only realized the truth when he lifted the person beneath him.

It was a robot!

Percival was astounded. How could a robot be indistinguishable from a real person, even mimicking

Vivienne's tone of voice?

Then the robot's mouth opened, and a scroll fell that read, [Congratulations, you've passed the second trial. This is your reward.]

Holding the scroll in his hand, Percival was momentarily speechless.

Was this another of Finnian's tests?

Was it a test of his resistance to temptation?

But this was Vivienne, whom he naturally desired. If he felt nothing for Vivienne, that would be a real problem.

Percival carried the faux Vivienne to her bedroom, where the real Vivienne was still sound asleep.

Finnian's sedative was indeed strong; even Vivienne had succumbed to it.

It seemed his immunity was part of this so-called test.

Percival settled himself in Vivienne's room, leaning against the robot double, and dozed off.

Meanwhile, at a mansion somewhere in Rivenwood, Finnian relaxed on a sun lounger while a man applied ointment to his hands.

"The kid's got a good eye and steady nerves. Looks like he knew from the start that the Vivienne replica was not the real deal."

Finnian nodded approvingly, pleased with Percival's performance in the second trial.

Now, it was time to think about the third one.

The man curved his lips in a silent smile, seemingly privy to the previous night's events.

Finnian glanced at the unfinished bionic robot in a nearby room. "Aren't you worried about sending this out? What if the girl finds out?"

The man shook his head. "She's been prepared for this. Better to send it out now than have her fooled later on."

"True. She isn't foolish, just short on evidence," Finnian said with pride. "But you owe me 80 million.

With me gone, she won't let Percival pay for me."

"Done," the man replied, finishing up the bandaging. "Medical fees, 100 million dollars. Don't forget the transfer."

With that, the man took his medical kit and left.

Finnian snorted. "You just like family!"

The next morning, Vivienne stirred awake in her bed.

She rubbed her temples, wondering if she had slept too soundly the night before.

Looking up, she saw Percival lying across "her" legs.

Vivienne blinked in confusion.

A doppelganger? Had she astral projected?

But within seconds, she realized it was a robot. Content belongs to Dramanovels.com

She jumped out of bed and tapped the robot's head.

The craftsmanship was impeccable, indistinguishable from the real thing.

Percival was roused from sleep by a voice. "Awake? Got a headache?"

"Yeah, he left me a test to deal with. No clue what it was supposed to test, though."

Percival recounted the previous night's ordeal, patting Vivienne on the shoulder, "This thing, could it be

some kind of advanced bionic?"

Percival's gut instinctively tightened.

Finnian was playing hardball!

Chapter 557

After hanging up the call, Vivienne stormed into Finnian's room, where other eight disciples were

sprawled out, sleeping like logs. With a swift kick, she woke them from their slumber.

Dawson was the first to come to his senses, groggily nudging Jerry beside him. "Get up, man. We've

gotta settle the score with Finnian."

The group roused themselves one by one, taking in their surroundings and falling silent for a few

seconds...

"Where the heck is Finnian?!"

Vivienne grabbed a magazine from the table and gave each of them a thwack on the head. "By the

time you lot figure it out, Finnian will have skipped town!"

Dawson rubbed his sore head and pointed accusingly at Percival. "Vivienne, why aren't you hitting

him?"

Without missing a beat, Vivienne delivered another smack to Dawson. "He's my man. Think you can

measure up?"

Percival smirked smugly at the others, his expression just begging for a punch.

But what could they do? After all, he was Vivienne's man.

The disciples collectively groaned, a chorus of shattered hearts.

After a round of scolding, Vivienne pointed toward the garden outside, "Go fix that fence and then frog

hop around the villa ten times. No dinner until it's done!"

"Vivienne, can we make it five laps?" Gary begged with puppy eyes.

Vivienne shot him a look that could freeze fire. "You, fifteen laps!"

Hearing that, the other disciples scattered like the wind. Fifteen laps were no joke!

Vivienne sighed heavily. "What's the use of having all these guys if they can't even keep an eye on an old man?"

Percival took Vivienne's hand. "Let's go. Now that Finnian's made an appearance, he won't hide again.

We'll have plenty of time to deal with him later."

"Alright."

Halfway out, Percival glanced at Vivienne, his lips pressed in query, "You didn't notice Finnian drugging

you yesterday?"

At the question, Vivienne's gaze sharpened, a fleeting glint crossing her eyes, "Nope."

She honestly had not noticed.

Percival raised an eyebrow. "Finnian's reputation is well-deserved, then."

He had not really looked into Finnian's capabilities, but he must be skilled if he could handle Vivienne

and those eight disciples.

Vivienne's eyes narrowed slightly, her tone casual yet firm. "It was not Finnian who drugged us

yesterday."

Percival looked puzzled. "You mean..."

Vivienne's lips curved into a sly smile, her captivating eyes shimmering with an enigmatic light. "There's

not a second person in this world who could knock me out."

It was not just confidence—it was certainty.

She might not be the best in medicine, but she was certainly not to be underestimated.

Especially when it came to poisons.

As they got into the car, Vivienne received a call from Yuri.

It was odd—Yuri never called early in the morning. Something must have happened.

After a moment's silence, she answered. "Uncle."

"Vivienne, are you busy? Can you come over? My dad's had an accident!"

A wave of unprecedented panic surged in Vivienne's heart, "I'm on my way!"

Percival floored the gas pedal, driving straight to the Perez Mansion.

Vivienne rushed out of the car and into the house, where Yuri and Zelda greeted her anxiously.

"What happened?" Vivienne asked in a hushed tone.

Zelda was in tears, but Yuri managed to remain composed, saying, "This morning, Dad was fine,

walking Natalia and Yasmine in the park. But he collapsed without warning before breakfast, and the

doctors can't find anything wrong."

Jasper had old injuries that flared up once in Sea City but had been stable since.

There had been warnings in the past, but this time, he passed out without a sign.

"What injury did Grandpa suffer from before?" Vivienne asked as they walked.

Yuri bit his lip, deciding to reveal the truth. "Dad got word of a sighting of Sasha near Fariana Isle.

When he arrived, he found only bones. He couldn't handle the shock and fainted. Since then, he's had a serious heart condition."

Vivienne paused, sensing the complexity of his illness.

They reached Jasper's bedroom, where the family doctor, a renowned heart surgeon named Keegan, was treating him. Vivienne had studied his work during her studies.

She stepped in, asking, "Professor Keegan, how is it?"

"I'll take a look." Vivienne approached, checking Jasper's pulse.

Keegan did not underestimate her because of her youth; instead, he stepped back to let her work.

Vivienne's frown deepened as she felt Jasper's pulse. It was almost imperceptible, yet his breathing was eerily calm—as if he were merely asleep.

This was medically impossible.

A compliment from Keegan was a rarity in the medical world, an honor bestowed to very few.

Vivienne nodded, a silent acknowledgment, as she reached into her pocket for the silver needle she always carried. With precision, she began to block Jasper's senses, one by one. Content belongs to

The piercing of each point on Jasper's body was sure to bring him excruciating pain.

Vivienne did not want to resort to such measures, but she had no choice. Jasper's condition was too peculiar, and it called for drastic actions.

With each needle she inserted, Jasper's breaths became more labored, his face contorted in agony.

Zelda watched with growing concern, her hand clasped by Yuri, who shook his head quietly. "Vivienne is the Specter Healer. She knows what she's doing."

It was unsurprising that Vivienne's identity was known to the Boyds or that Yuri had discovered it.

Otherwise, he would not have called her today.

As Vivienne prepared to insert the final needle, she was suddenly repelled by an invisible, forceful energy, sending her stumbling back several feet.

Percival caught her, his eyes filled with worry. "You've gone pale," he said, "Is something wrong?"

Catching her breath and standing firm, Vivienne's gaze was icy as she fixed her eyes on Jasper. "I'd like to know what's happening myself," she said with a steely tone.

Chapter 558

Vivienne steadied herself, gently easing Percival's hand away.

Approaching Jasper again, she listened to his strained breathing, her expression growing more serious by the moment.

Taking a deep breath, Vivienne raised the needle in her hand and aimed for Jasper's pressure point.

Bang!

Vivienne was sent flying, her speed so swift that even Percival could not intercept her in time, barely managing to grasp her hand.

"Vivienne!" Percival half-knelt on the ground, cradling the fallen Vivienne in his arms and propping her against his leg.

A gush of dark blood surged from Vivienne's lips, her complexion turning deathly pale.

Yuri hurried over, pressing down on the heel of Vivienne's hand with vigor.

"Vivienne, feeling any better?" Yuri asked with concern.

Vivienne nodded, standing up with the support of Percival's hand, a flash of disbelief in her eyes.

She had failed to administer the needle?

What could possibly be the reason?

What on earth was hiding inside Jasper's body?

"I'll try again." Vivienne was determined; her skills would not fail her now!

Percival, Yuri, and Zelda all tried to dissuade her, worried for her safety. "Vivienne, don't try again."

"Yeah, Vivienne, let me figure something out. If it happens again, your meridians could shatter."

"Vivienne, take a seat and rest. Drink this; it will help balance your energy pathways." Zelda handed

her a cup filled with blue water.

Recognizing the extremely rare Blue Infusion, Vivienne took the cup and drank it down, saying, "Don't

worry, I'll take care of myself. Grandpa is more important."

With that, Vivienne stepped forward once more. Yuri tried to stop her, but Percival raised a hand.

He shook his head at Yuri and said, "Let Vivienne do what she's decided; no one should interfere."

As he spoke, he stood behind Vivienne, arms outstretched in a protective stance.

If Vivienne were to be repelled again, he would be there to cushion the blow and reduce the impact.

Vivienne focused intently on the final pressure point, channeling all her energy into the tip of the needle

and thrusting it down forcefully.

An invisible barrier halted the needle in Vivienne's hand. Despite exerting all her strength, she could not

penetrate it.

Seeing this, Yuri placed a hand on Vivienne's wrist, lending his strength to assist her.

The barrier seemed to resist with greater force. Sweat beaded on Vivienne's forehead, and even Yuri began to wobble.

Vivienne exhaled deeply, releasing all her tension.

Another loud bang.

Both Vivienne and Yuri were repelled, Yuri dropping to his knees, the hand that had touched Vivienne's wrist throbbing with pain as if a thousand needles were piercing it.

Thanks to Percival's support and the effects of the Blue Infusion, Vivienne did not suffer shattered meridians, but she nearly passed out.

The gold needle in her hand shattered into several pieces, scattering on the floor.

Even Percival, who had absorbed some of the impact, coughed up blood, feeling as if his internal organs had been displaced.

Zelda helped them up, giving each a cup of Blue Infusion, which offered a slight reprieve.

"What's going on? What happened? Vivienne, are you alright?" Zelda's eyes were red with worry.

Jasper's breathing on the sickbed grew more labored, and with Vivienne and the others in such a state,

Zelda felt helpless, her only recourse being tears and anxiety.

Vivienne reached out and took Zelda's hand. "I'm fine. I'll heal Uncle Yuri's hand in a bit, don't worry.

Could you please brew another pot of Blue Infusion? Grandpa might need it later."

Zelda nodded vigorously, wiping away her tears. "Vivienne, don't exert yourself anymore. I'll go make the Blue Infusion right now."

Zelda rushed to the kitchen, and the facade of ease vanished from Vivienne's face.

"Uncle Yuri, how are you holding up?" She asked.

Yuri gripped his right arm. "I'll survive, it's nothing."

"Mr. Wolf?"

"All good," Percival said, steadying his heartbeat and calming his breath.

Vivienne wiped the sweat from her brow and tried to stand but found herself completely drained. Sitting back down, she pulled out her phone and dialed Finnian's number.

Finnian's number had not changed; now that his staged death had been exposed, he would not ignore

or reject Vivienne's calls.

He answered quickly, and his voice had a hint of mischief, "Little girl, we agreed your fiancé would cover that 80 million debt. You can't just..."

Vivienne coughed, clutching the fresh blood in her palm, "The Perez Mansion."

Finnian's tone shifted to seriousness upon hearing Vivienne's breath, "What's going on?"

"My grandpa collapsed, but I can't penetrate his heart with a needle. Something is blocking me."

Vivienne had encountered such situations before, but they were always easily resolved. However, this time, even her needle had snapped!

This was the first time since she had mastered her medical skills that she faced a situation where she could not administer treatment.

Finnian glanced at the man opposite him. "Alright, we're on our way."

After hanging up, Finnian told the man, "Seems like it's time for you to come out of retirement."

The man nodded in agreement. It was clear that if Vivienne could not handle the situation, it was time for him to step in.

Ten minutes later, Finnian arrived at the Perez Mansion with the man in tow.

Why did her heart ache so fiercely?

Without questioning him, Vivienne complied. As the pill dissolved in her mouth, she knew this man possessed skills far beyond her own.

He then glanced at Percival and flicked his forehead as effortlessly as one might snap their fingers.

Percival felt a surge of energy tighten at his brow, clearing his energy pathways more effectively than ten pots of Blue Infusion.

"Next time, don't overdo it," the man said softly.

The man turned to look at Yuri, pausing ever so slightly before stepping forward and inserting a needle into his right arm.

"In ten minutes, let Vi... let the young lady take it out. She'll know what to do," he said.

Yuri offered his thanks. "Sir, regarding my father..."

"With me here, it'll be fine," the man assured him with a smile, then carried his medical bag into the room.

Finnian stood guard at the door. "He prefers to work in private. Please be patient; it won't be long."

Chapter 559

Ten minutes had passed when Vivienne's eyelids fluttered open, the discomfort in her heart a faded

memory. She rose to inspect Yuri's right hand, where the needle had been inserted. The sight gave her a moment's pause.

Such a peculiar way to administer a needle...

"Kiddo, when did I ever teach you to let your mind wander while treating a patient?" Finnian's voice snapped her back to reality.

Gathering herself, Vivienne twisted the needle gently at Yuri's pressure point before slowly withdrawing it. She then placed a Life-saving pill on Yuri's tongue, which helped his hand return to normal.

"Vivienne, I'm feeling much better." Yuri flexed his hand and turned to Finnian, "You must be Master Finnian, Vivienne's mentor?"

Finnian gave a nod. "That's me."

Yuri bowed his head slightly in acknowledgment. "My apologies for not greeting you properly. Please rest a while, and once the gentleman inside comes out, I shall express my gratitude."

"We're all family here. No need for formalities," Finnian said, taking the seat Vivienne had just vacated, eyeing the Blue Infusion on the table.

The Perez family sure knew how to live large. Blue Infusion was a rare commodity, fetching billions for a single chunk, and here they were, brewing it as if it were plain tap water.

Vivienne could almost read Finnian's mind by the look on his face. She approached him and lifted his sleeve to find the wound on his arm healing nicely, which eased a weight off her heart.

She glanced at the closed door to Jasper's room, saying, "That guy earlier, was he the expert friend you mentioned?"

Finnian nodded. "Of course. Handsome fellow, isn't he? Puts your fiancé to shame."

Ignoring Finnian's cheeky comment, Vivienne pressed on, "Has he ever been to the Emerald Monastery?"

"No, he's an old friend from way back. We met after my death. You wouldn't have met him," Finnian said, waving his hand dismissively.

Yuri, who was sipping the Blue Infusion, nearly choked on his drink. "You met after what now?"

Vivienne pressed her palm to her forehead in exasperation. "Uncle, my mentor once faked his death and had us all fooled. He's only recently 'come back to life.'"

Understanding dawned on Yuri, and he chuckled. "Master Finnian, your life is quite... colorful."

"Ordinary, I'd say. If it were not for this girl pressing me, I'd be even more carefree," Finnian replied

nonchalantly, with a hint of pride.

Yuri set down his cup. "The gentleman who just went inside seemed familiar, too. I can't quite place it.

Have we met before?"

Vivienne and Percival exchanged surprised glances. Yuri felt it, too? Who was this man?

Finnian absentmindedly twirled his fingers. "My friend has one of those common faces, the everyman

look. Everyone finds him familiar."

Vivienne quipped. "There's no way he could be more handsome than my Mr. Wolf."

"Hey, since when did you become such a flirt?" Finnian teased, "Sit tight, and don't let it turn into an

internal injury."

Vivienne touched her chest. "No worries there. All my injuries have healed."

She turned her gaze back to the bedroom door and said, "Finnian, your friend's medical skills are far

superior to mine."

Everyone, save for Finnian, looked astonished.

Vivienne was regarded as the Specter Healer, famed for reviving the dead and mending broken bones.

Could someone really surpass her?

Finnian simply chuckled. "There's always someone better. But don't be disheartened, kiddo. You're only nineteen. By the time you're his age, you'll be the world's number one healer."

"I'm not disheartened, just curious. I've never heard of this man before. He's never shown his face, and now you've found him?" Vivienne inquired.

"Isn't that the case? You've kept a low profile all these years, and look at you now, the Specter Healer!"

Finnian's words left Vivienne without a comeback.

Half an hour later, the bedroom door finally swung open, and a man emerged, his forehead slick with sweat and his shirt stained with blood.

Vivienne approached. "Are you okay?"

The man caught his breath. "I'm fine. Did you brew the medicine? Bring it here so we can give it to Jasper."

Checking her watch, Vivienne noted the timing was right.

Keegan approached with a bowl of steaming concoction. The man fed the brew to Jasper and said,

"He'll wake up soon. I need to rest now."

Vivienne moved to assist him, but Finnian beat her to it. "Here, drink up. We've got Blue Infusion ready for you."

Vivienne's hand hovered in the air before she let it drop, saying nothing more.

The man sat down and sipped the Blue Infusion, finally catching his breath.

"Mr. Perez, your father's old injury flared up, but he's been soothed for now. Remember, on the eighth of every month, ensure Jasper stays indoors," he advised.

Yuri nodded, "May I have the honor of knowing your name, sir?"

"Vesper Linklater."

A flicker of surprise crossed Yuri's eyes. The surname Linklater was uncommon in Veridia.

Percival, too, was familiar with the Linklater name.

And he also happened to know of a Linklater, but not this one.

He was his hero.

Apart from Karen, this guy was the one he looked up to the most!

But just like Yuri thought, their hero had been off the radar for quite some time.

But at the moment, she was preoccupied with something else entirely. Read at Drămanovels.com

"Mr. Linklater, why couldn't I insert the needle just now? What exactly is inside my grandfather's body?"

She was confident in her medical skills but also willing to acknowledge her limitations.

The Mr. Linklater before her was undoubtedly more skilled, and since she did not know why she could

not insert the needle, she was naturally eager to seek his advice.

However, Vivienne's gaze remained fixed on Vesper's face as she asked the question.

She was trying to see if Vesper had used a disguise, but unfortunately, she found no evidence.

Even the structure of Vesper's face had not changed at all.

Vivienne's brow, slender as willow leaves, furrowed imperceptibly. No disguise, no altered bone

structure—why did she feel this man was so familiar?

And the closer she got to him, the stronger this sense of familiarity became.

Chapter 560

Vivienne nodded thoughtfully. It seemed that the entity within Jasper had a consciousness after all.

Gracefully setting the cup down, Vesper continued to instruct Vivienne, "Make sure you visit your

grandfather on the ninth of every month. Take note of every pulse, remember it, and record it. Find the

pattern. If you want to rid Jasper of this thing entirely, it will take a considerable amount of time.”

“I understand. Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Linklater,” Vivienne replied with a polite nod, though her eyes betrayed a flicker of determination.

Percival approached with his smartphone in hand. “Would you mind if we exchanged contact details, Mr. Linklater? In case anything else happens with Jasper, we could reach you promptly.”

“I do mind,” Vesper curtly refused, his aloof demeanor mirroring Vivienne's when they first met.

Unperturbed, Percival simply said, “I just wish to be able to reach out for help when necessary.”

“Your fiancée is more than capable. The title of Specter Healer isn’t just for show,” Vesper said, nodding towards Vivienne with a hint of pride.

Vivienne blinked in surprise. “You know of me?”

“Of course. We’re both in the medical field. Who hasn’t heard of the Specter Healer?”

“Compared to you, my achievements are modest. I insist, please, could you share a way to contact you?” Vivienne did not want to miss the opportunity to connect with this enigmatic figure.

Vesper remained steadfast in his refusal. “My consultancy fees are steep, Mr. Perez. Make sure the

payment is transferred to my account. Here's my account number."

Yuri accepted the card with both hands. "Of course."

Vivienne and Percival exchanged a look, realizing Vesper had no intention of leaving any trace behind.

Upon examining the card, Vivienne found nothing but Vesper's name. No leads.

This man was definitely more than he seemed.

Just then, Natalia and Yasmine burst in from preschool, making a beeline for Vivienne.

"Vivienne!" They chorused, wrapping her in a tight hug.

Vesper watched the scene, a burst of laughter breaking on his usually impassive face.

Drawn by his laughter, the girls released Vivienne and sidled up to Vesper.

"What are you looking at, munchkins?" Vesper crouched down to their level.

With a curious tilt of her head, Natalia glanced at Percival and then back at Vesper. "I used to think

Percival was the most handsome man ever, but you're even more handsome."

Yasmine nodded eagerly, "Yeah, Percival is now in second place!"

Vesper chuckled, and Percival feigned a wounded look.

He turned to Vivienne, his eyes playfully asking, 'Am I not the most handsome?'

Vivienne responded with a reassuring gaze, 'Of course you are!'

Percival no longer cared about the girls' opinions at that point.

Yuri squatted beside his daughters, "Girls, where does Daddy rank?"

"Fourth!" they shouted in unison.

Yuri reiterated, "Remember, we're talking about looks ranking, not my place at home."

"Yeah, fourth," Natalia reaffirmed.

"And Uncle Maddox was second, but now there's Vesper," Yasmine added.

"Your Uncle Maddox beats me?" Yuri feigned heartbreak.

The girls nodded seriously. "Uncle Maddox said, men devalue after marriage. You, Uncle Fredrick, and

Uncle Luke all lost on that account. Such a pity."

Yuri thought, "Maddox, stay away from my girls!"

Miles away, in Sea City, Maddox sneezed mightily and turned up the heat in his tub.

Looking at the playful girls, Vivienne was growing fonder of them.

Vesper, clearly taken with the children, pulled out two pairs of intricately made shoes from his bag.

They were handcrafted with gold laces, exuding a modern chic rather than tackiness.

Vivienne noticed the high-quality herbal materials stitched into the shoes, designed to protect Natalia and Yasmine from mosquitoes and common childhood illnesses.

“Do you like these shoes, Natalia, Yasmine?” Vesper asked.

“Love them! The flowers are prettier than any Mommy has painted. Vesper, can you teach her?” Natalia admired the shoes.

Yasmine agreed. “Yes, please teach Mommy.”

Zelda blushed from the side. “Girls, mind your manners.”

Vesper just smiled and fitted the shoes on their feet, a perfect match as if tailor-made for them.

“They’re yours, a thank you for your high praise.”

Yuri and Zelda tried to protest. “Mr. Linklater, we couldn’t possibly accept...”

“These are between me and the kids, Mr. and Mrs. Perez. No interference,” Vesper insisted as he ruffled the girls' hair, clearly delighted.

Seeing his fondness, Yuri and Zelda did not press the issue.

But on the side, Vivienne’s eyes narrowed.

Were Vesper's shoes prepared in advance, or was it just a fortunate coincidence?

But how could it be so coincidental? The shoes fit perfectly, were styled for girls, and there were two pairs?

At that moment, Keegan emerged from Jasper's bedroom. "Jasper's awake," he announced with a hint of relief in his voice.

With a child cradled in each arm, Vesper made his way to the bedside and gently laid the toddlers down.

Jasper's eyes fluttered open, and in his grogginess, he mistook Vesper for Yuri. "Son, why didn't you drop off Natalia and Yasmine at school?"

Standing at the foot of the bed, Yuri blinked in confusion before stepping closer. "Dad, I'm right here.

You've been asleep for a whole day. Natalia and Yasmine are already back," he reassured his father.

Vesper checked Jasper's pulse, laughing softly. "You're not senile just yet."

Jasper turned to look at Vesper, and tears unexpectedly started to stream down his cheeks. "Yeah, I still haven't found my Sasha."

Vesper's hand paused, his fingers curling slightly in a rare display of emotion that flickered in his eyes

before he regained his composure.

It was a fleeting moment, but Vivienne caught it.

The curiosity in Vivienne's gaze deepened as she watched Vesper.

Yuri and the others breathed a sigh of relief. "Thank you, Mr. Linklater," they expressed their gratitude.