

Million-Dollar 641

Chapter 641

Percival tightened his embrace, resting his forehead just above Vivienne's brows, whispering tenderly,

"Looking at my Vivienne."

My Vivienne.

Few words in the world could send Vivienne's heart fluttering quite like those.

She felt as if she had plunged into a pool of spring water, her entire being drenched in its soothing embrace.

Their gazes locked, neither willing to take a step closer.

In their eyes, there was only each other, each deeply etching the other's features into their memory.

They tugged at each other, eyes speaking volumes.

Creak...

The lab door swung open, and Karen marched in, dragging Rex by the ear, the awkwardness in the room thick enough to cut with a knife.

Karen was the first to snap out of it. "Carry on, lovebirds. I've got a bone to pick with this good-for-nothing apprentice!"

Vivienne watched as Karen pulled Rex aside and, with a swift kick, sent him sprawling.

Meanwhile, she and Percival were still wrapped up in each other, fingers interlocked.

"Boss, your daughter's over here making goo-goo eyes, and you're not saying a peep? She's underage

and being seduced by an older man—aren't you gonna do something about it?"

Rex's outburst was swiftly silenced by Karen's expert move.

"If you don't spill the beans on all those toxins you've been cooking up over the years, you might as

well forget about talking ever again."

Karen had zero tolerance for her underlings causing trouble.

If she had known Rex was actually Brody, she would have cut him down long ago!

Vivienne pursed her lips, conceding that when it came to inner strength, her mom was unbeatable.

"Old man, gonna let go, or do you want to play a live show?" Vivienne teased, pulling away with a

mischievous wink.

Percival let go, touched his nose awkwardly, and stepped forward, handing Karen a stun baton.

"Master, this might come in handy."

The stun baton, a creation of Brody's, could discharge a burst of high voltage at the push of a button and was designed to simulate the debilitating force of a hurricane.

Karen gave the baton a twirl. "Not bad at all!"

Brody shot Percival a look of utter despair.

Alright, he got it.

Birds of a feather flock together—Karen was shamelessly cunning, Percival was sly and ruthless, and

Vivienne was wickedly sharp. None of them were saints!

After enjoying his moment of revenge, Percival, with Vivienne in tow, left the lab.

On the way, Vivienne relayed the events that had unfolded at Mara's house to Percival, "Looks like they're targeting the Miller family again, trying to use them to stir up trouble within the Nine Mystics Society and destabilize us."

Vivienne had said a lot, but all Percival heard was: "Something, something... Aaron saw me today, something, something..."

"Alright, I got it."

Vivienne paused, "Got what, exactly?"

Percival flashed a sly grin, deftly changing the subject, "Thomas called me earlier and said Gillian has already reported to headquarters."

"That quick? What position?" Vivienne inquired.

"She's on par with Vance, appointed as the new Secretary-General. Officially, she's there to learn, but reality is she's the main office's eyes in Rivenwood."

Ever since Percival left, Rivenwood's Vanguard Agency became a thorn in Sea City's side.

Everyone knew that the agents of Rivenwood's Vanguard Agency were Percival's people. Even with him gone, their loyalties had departed with him.

To prevent Rivenwood from becoming entirely Percival's domain, a new overseer was necessary.

Out of all the agents, they had to send Gillian, who had a grudge against Percival.

Webster's message was clear: Rivenwood was not for Percival to rule alone.

Vivienne chuckled. "A spy? They should've at least picked someone with brains like Leopold—that's the bare minimum, and yet they sent her?"

Leopold: I feel like someone's praising me... or maybe not.

Percival laughed. "Who can discern the main office's true intent?"

At the Vanguard Agency, Vance called a disgruntled Thomas into his office.

"Gillian's just arrived, unfamiliar with everything around here. As the captain of the headquarters, take care of her, will you?"

Thomas was fed up—never had he seen a former suspect become his boss.

Vance's eyes twinkled with the understanding of Thomas' inner turmoil.

"The main office has cleared her. No issues there. Just focus on your job and show her around the training ground."

Thomas begrudgingly acknowledged. "Will do."

With a wave of his hand, Vance dismissed Thomas.

He exhaled deeply, pondering over Gillian's file.

Yorick had personally recommended her—Gillian was no small fry.

But no matter how he looked at it, her ties to the ancient warrior lineage were undeniable.

The Ashford family had long coveted the assets of the once-mighty Boyd family, an ancient warrior lineage. Now, with Patrick Ashford locked up, Gillian Ashford had managed to join the Vanguard

Agency and been sent to Rivenwood.

It was hard to believe she had no connections to the ancient warrior lineage.

But who was backing her?

Thomas had just stepped out of his suburban home when he bumped into Gillian, who was on her way to deliver some documents.

"Long time no see, Captain Thomas," Gillian said with a smile, unfazed by the encounter.

Gillian's smile froze, and a flicker of discomfort passed through her eyes.

Thomas's words were far from pleasantries; they bordered on insult.

And his voice carried, loud and clear, ensuring that everyone in the busy neighborhood could hear.

Gillian's composure was hanging by a thread, but she managed to hold it. "Yes, well, I was innocent. It was just that at the time..."

"I'm not interested in 'at the time,' you've got three minutes to join me at the training field. Don't be late,"

Thomas said, checking his watch with a stern face before shouting to everyone present, "Three minutes, assemble!" Content of Drămanovels.com

The whole Vanguard Agency was on high alert, more serious than if they were heading out on a mission.

Thomas rarely used that tone, but when he did, it meant that today's training was going to be brutal.

Gillian was still processing when the once noisy crowd had already geared up, ready to move out.

And there she was in her skirt and heels, hopelessly outpaced.

"Wait for me!" Gillian hastily dropped the documents and dashed to the locker room to change.

By the time she arrived at the parking lot, Thomas was already counting down the last ten seconds.

She hurried over, nearly tripping in her rush, and climbed into the vehicle, only to be told, "Sorry, Gillian, this is the captain's seat."

"Then where do I sit?" Gillian asked, baffled.

The driver pointed to the trunk. "If you want to experience a day at the training field, you take the back."

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Gillian gripped her hands tightly, frustration and disbelief etching her features.

There was no way Leopold could have mistaken her. In the entire Vanguard Agency, she was the only one with curly, untamed hair. How could anyone mix that up?

"Second squad, what's the holdup? Move out now, or it's a ten-kilometer march with full gear!" barked

Thomas.

Leopold hopped onto the truck, smacking the canvas cover. "Let's roll out, folks. If we lose to that smug

jerk Hotshot today, I swear you'll wish you were never born!"

Powerless, Gillian watched as the truck rumbled away from her. She turned to hop into Thomas's

vehicle, only to see him already seated and starting the engine.

"Thomas, wait for me!" she yelled, but Thomas drove off as if he hadn't heard a thing.

Vehicles had strict protocols at Vanguard Agency; you couldn't just take one without prior approval.

With her own car off-limits within the training grounds, Gillian had no choice but to chase after them on

foot.

Upstairs, Micah sipped his coffee, watching the scene unfold with a sly grin curling his lips.

That kid Thomas was definitely taking a page out of Percival's book.

On the phone, Micah relayed Thomas's antics to Percival.

Percival chuckled. "Let them be."

"But Percival, keep an eye out for Gillian. She's backed by Yorick. She's no simpleton," Micah warned.

"Don't worry. She's not going to stir up any real trouble."

Hearing Percival's confident tone, Micah scoffed. "What did your mentor say?"

After a few seconds of silence, Percival replied, "How come, after all these years, you still depend on my mentor? Don't you have a mind of your own?"

"Percival! You..."

The call ended with a dial tone, and Micah slammed the phone down in irritation.

"That little rascal!"

Percival nonchalantly scratched his nose and tossed the phone aside.

Vivienne glanced at him. "Aren't you worried your boss might not let this slide?"

"What's there to worry about? We've got Vance, don't we?" he said casually.

Vivienne arched an eyebrow. "Alright, if you say so."

Meanwhile, Anna, who was training on the field, received a call.

"Yes, I'm on my way back."

Soren, fresh in new gear, saw Anna heading out and called after her, "Where are you off to? We still

have a sparring match."

"No time," Anna retorted without looking back, waving off Soren. "Next time, I'll make sure you're crying for your mamma."

Leopold laughed heartily. "Go get 'em, Anna! I'm rooting for ya!"

Soren, finishing his wrist wraps, taunted Leopold, "You're the one who'll be bawling today!"

As Anna left the training grounds, she ran into a breathless Gillian.

Looking as if she might collapse at any moment, Gillian waved her over. "Where are you going? Why aren't you training?"

Anna, fearing Gillian might just melt into a puddle under the sun, said, "I'm on a mission. Since when do you oversee our daily routines?"

Gillian straightened up, trying to assert some authority. "Isn't it my job to look after every member's daily activities?"

Anna smiled thinly. "Maybe worry more about those two big wolf dogs chasing you than micromanaging us."

Gillian froze. "What big wolf dog?"

Just as she asked, the sound of barking grew louder from behind, heading straight for her.

Those were the two wolf dogs Percival had trained to chase after the agents, smart enough to adjust their ferocity based on their target.

They went easy on the new recruits, but with veterans like Leopold and Thomas, they showed no mercy.

Now, it was Gillian being chased across the training field as if she were fresh meat.

Thomas kept an eye on Gillian but showed no sign of intervening.

"She wants inside info on our training ground? In her dreams!" He thought.

Gillian ran for her life, narrowly avoiding becoming lunch for the two pursuing wolf dogs.

"Why isn't anyone doing anything? Help!" she screamed while running, but no one paid her any heed.

Everyone else stood aside, cheering and clapping as though watching a blockbuster movie.

"Gillian, you're killing it! You'd win any endurance race!"

"The power of a determined woman—go, Gillian!"

"Run faster, Mr. Black and Black are picking up the pace!"

Mr. Black and Black were the names of the two wolf dogs.

Finally, with no other option, Gillian dove into a mud pit to escape.

The wolves, being the clean freaks they were, barked in disappointment at Gillian from the mud pit's edge, then left in disdain.

Gillian, in her twenty-some years, had never been so insulted by dogs.

She screamed in frustration, slapping the mud with her hands, wishing she could hurl the muck at those canines.

The whistle signaling the end of training blew, and the agents lined up promptly.

"Good work today, team. Let's wrap it up early and head home for dinner!" Thomas announced.

Cheers erupted as the agents boarded their vehicles, ready to leave.

Gillian, still struggling in the mud, watched everyone depart, her eyes wide with disbelief. "Where are you going? Wait for me!"

Yet, no one responded to Gillian's cries for help, and she could only watch helplessly as the squad's vehicles drove away.

It took Gillian a grueling half-hour to claw her way out of the mud pit.

Gillian was not accustomed to such humiliation, and she let out heart-wrenching sobs in the middle of the training ground.

The watchful gatekeeper, with his dogs Mr. Black and Black in tow, approached her. "Hey, you gonna leave or what? If you don't, I'm locking up, and you'll have to keep Mr. Black and Black company for the night." Updated at Dramanovels.com

Both Mr. Black and Black growled at Gillian, expressing their discontent.

Terrified, Gillian shuddered violently, scrambling to her feet and limping away from the training ground.

"Mommy, is that lady a hobo? She's all dirty."

Gillian turned toward the innocent child at the roadside and snarled, "You little brat! Scram! I'm gonna go over there and kill you!"

The child's parents hurriedly scooped up their son and whisked him away.

Don't engage with the crazies; it's a rule of thumb.

Gillian clenched her fists in fury. The indignity she had suffered today, she vowed, would be repaid tenfold.

Meanwhile, Anna had already driven up to the Perez Mansion.

"Anna, darling, come in, come in!" Zelda greeted Anna with open arms and a warm smile, ushering her into the family home.

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Blinking her eyes, Anna felt that Zelda was unusually enthusiastic today.

She glanced at Vivienne, seeking help, and Vivienne shot her a knowing look that said, "Girl, my aunt fancies you as a niece-in-law."

Anna nearly choked on her drink. She was too young to be shackled by the chains of arranged dating!

No way, not happening!

Seeing Anna's pleading eyes, Vivienne kindly excused her, breaking the tension.

Zelda, aware that Vivienne had serious matters to discuss, didn't press further, content to wait until they were finished.

"Actually, my junior brother isn't too shabby. Why not give him a shot?" Vivienne teased, playfully tipping Anna's chin.

Anna blushed. "Ms. Vivienne, when did you start being so cheeky?"

"Picked it up from our Mr. Wolf."

Percival, who had just walked in, paused upon hearing this.

What? Was he really that cheeky?

Anna quickly changed the subject when she saw Percival return. "Mr. Ellington, Herman mentioned you were looking for me. What's up?"

Percival sat down next to Vivienne and said, "You're about to graduate from Elite University, right?

Applied for grad school yet?"

Anna nodded. "Yeah, just haven't had the chance to take the exams; been swamped with training assignments lately."

"Go for it, stick close to Aaron."

It took Anna a moment to remember who Aaron was. "Stick close to him for what?"

It was then that Vivienne chimed in, "Aaron's been dealing with the Brooks family lately, investigating the bionic biotech related to F-Poison. Assist him. There's a Mara close to him with dubious intentions; just keep an eye on her discreetly; don't blow your cover."

Anna understood but still felt uneasy. "Ms. Vivienne, Noah is with GTO. They must know I'm with

Vanguard Agency. Gillian even saw me at the training grounds today. Won't this raise their suspicions?"

Vivienne smiled. "It will. And they'll wonder if you're there to investigate Aaron or Mara. Basically, you'll be shrouded in mystery, and many will watch you. Be careful."

Anna burst into laughter at this. She relished this kind of game. "Mission accepted."

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At Mara's house.

Mara was looking at herself in the mirror, wondering if it was her imagination or if her scars really didn't look as horrific as before.

Then, the door burst open.

A mud-covered Gillian strode in.

Mara jumped, retreating with a pillow in hand. "What... What have you done to yourself? Stay back, don't dirty my clothes!"

Gillian lunged at her, pinning her to the floor, and repeatedly smacked her face.

"Did you keep an eye on Vivienne like I asked? No progress in all this time. Have you been taking my

words for granted?"

Mara was dazed from the blows. "What are you on about? I've told you everything, and Vivienne's coming over tomorrow. What's the deal?"

Pushing Gillian off, Mara wiped her face in disgust. "What's gotten into you?"

Gillian regained some sanity. "Tomorrow, I need results. I want Aaron under your control, got it?"

Mara sensed Gillian's madness and nodded. "Got it."

The next morning, Vivienne arrived at Mara's house as promised.

Mara greeted her warmly. "Vivienne, you're here! I've prepared some fruit tea for you. Try it."

Vivienne eyed the brew. It was indeed fruit tea, nothing extra added.

Taking a sip, Vivienne asked casually, "Bedroom or living room?"

"The bedroom." Mara laughed awkwardly, leading Vivienne into the room.

When the anticipated pain hit, Mara rolled wildly on the bed. This episode was more intense than before; she even ran amok in the room, breaking things.

Vivienne sat by, quietly observing the spectacle.

This time, the pain wasn't as bad as before. Was Mara's dramatics serving another purpose?

Then a voice came from outside. "Mara, are you okay?"

Vivienne raised an eyebrow; it was Aaron. What was he doing here again?

Mara flung open the door, and Aaron stepped in. The sight of the disheveled room and Mara's sweat-drenched face left him in shock.

Aaron steadied Mara, turning to Vivienne in confusion. "What's going on? Vivienne, is she alright?"

Leaning back in her chair with her legs crossed, Vivienne replied nonchalantly, "She's fine."

Mara suddenly shoved Aaron away, throwing him into the bedroom and dashing out. And "accidentally," the door shut behind her.

Click. The door locked.

Aaron was stunned and tried the handle, but it wouldn't budge.

"Vivienne, this..." Aaron looked at her, at a loss.

Vivienne was relaxed, "If you can't get out, just stay put. It's not like there's anything to do. She'll be over it in an hour."

She was curious to see what new tricks Mara had up her sleeve.

Aaron pursed his lips, his gaze falling on Vivienne.

She was always untouchable, like Venus herself, no matter when he saw her.

Sitting down, with only a tiny sofa in Mara's room, Aaron had no choice but to take a seat on the bed.

Outside, Mara caught her breath. She touched her cheek; it was indeed less painful than before, within her threshold of tolerance.

Fidgeting restlessly, Aaron flapped at his T-shirt, his cheeks flushing a deep shade of crimson.

Vivienne, noticing his discomfort, asked, "Are you alright?"

Aaron shook his head, "I... I don't know, Vivienne, I feel awful." Content belongs to Dr̄manovels.com

Vivienne approached and took his hand, her touch gentle.

Suddenly, Aaron, as if possessed, gripped her hand tightly.

"Vivienne, I feel terrible. I just... I need to hold you..."

Suddenly, with a loud bang, the bedroom door flew open, and the room instantly filled with the bitter scent of a fire extinguisher.

"Fire! Fire! Hang on, Vivienne, I'm coming to the rescue!"

Vivienne shielded her eyes before leaping to safety. Once the smoke cleared, she opened her eyes to

a chaotic scene.

Kenneth, holding the fire extinguisher, was pinned under Aaron, who had him in an iron grip, rendering him immobile.

Their legs were tangled in a most undignified fashion.

Aaron lay peacefully atop Kenneth, a small lump forming on his head – a lump that matched a dent on the extinguisher.

Vivienne could only stand there, speechless.

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Vivienne rolled her eyes at the scene before her and silently slipped out of the room.

Anna stood at the doorway, gripping Mara, who was feigning unconsciousness.

"Ms. Vivienne, what should we do with her?"

"Forget her," Vivienne waved dismissively. "Just feed this to Aaron when he wakes up."

Anna nodded in understanding. "Got it."

As Vivienne left, she couldn't help but give Mara a wry smile.

Meanwhile, Kenneth was floundering in the bedroom, shouting, "Isn't anyone coming to save me?"

Hello? Anybody?!"

Anna glanced indifferently at Kenneth, then descended the stairs, dragging the "passed out" Mara behind her.

Mara bit back the pain, seething with resentment. Couldn't this woman carry her down the stairs properly instead of dragging her like some rag doll?

Her legs were probably covered in bruises!

And why on earth was Kenneth here?

Mara had planned to trap Aaron and Vivienne together and then bring Percival over to witness. Even if nothing happened, the misunderstanding would be enough.

Without Percival, and with a rift between her and Aaron, her mission would be complete.

But Kenneth ended up being the one to show up, ruining everything!

Idiot!

It wasn't until nightfall that Aaron finally opened his eyes, lying atop Kenneth.

With a throbbing headache, he sat up, parched and clueless about what had happened.

"Dude, you've been sitting on my junk," Kenneth groaned.

Aaron jumped back as if electrocuted, stumbling until he hit a dresser, finally snapping to his senses.

"What the... How did you end up here? What the hell were you doing?"

Kenneth sat up, cradling the fire extinguisher like a prized possession. "I should be asking you. You've been on top of me the whole day. You've got some Hulk strength or something; I couldn't even shove you off. Look at this bruise!"

Kenneth lifted his shirt to reveal a red mark on his chest where Aaron had been lying.

Just then, Anna, who had been waiting, walked in to check on them and caught Kenneth with his shirt up and Aaron blushing.

She blinked. "Sorry, didn't mean to interrupt."

With that, Anna hurried downstairs, thinking she had chosen the worst possible moment to appear.

Kenneth tried to follow her, but Aaron held him back.

"Explain yourself! What's going on here?"

All Aaron remembered was being locked in a room with Vivienne, who seemed to be checking his pulse, and then nothing else.

As for why Kenneth was there and what Anna was doing there, he was utterly lost.

Kenneth sighed. "I came here to sort you out. What were you doing here, and why were you holding

Vivienne's hand like that? I rushed in to rescue her from your clutches, and you just dragged me down

and laid on top of me, trying to rip off my shirt. If I hadn't knocked you out with the fire extinguisher, my

virtue would've been compromised!"

Aaron frowned, clueless. "You brought a fire extinguisher?"

Kenneth licked his lips, guilt flickering in his eyes.

The truth was, he had received a text from Percival saying Anna was coming over to discuss some

college prep with Aaron, so he brought the fire extinguisher as a precaution for the confrontation. But

he hadn't expected to find Aaron and Vivienne in a bedroom, which altered his plans somewhat.

Anna: Do I sense Kenneth got played by someone?

Percival: Really? I didn't notice.

"Why do you care what I bring? What about you, holding onto Vivienne's hand with dubious

intentions?" Kenneth pressed.

Aaron was at a loss for words, remembering nothing.

Seeing Aaron drop the fire extinguisher inquiry, Kenneth clapped him on the shoulder, walking him out.

"Forget it. Let's head back to campus."

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Elsewhere, Vivienne smiled in satisfaction at the successful chip synthesis on her screen.

Percival was by her side, meticulously wiping her wrist with antiseptic wipes, one by one.

"That's enough," Vivienne complained, withdrawing her hand. "The chip has fused with Mara's body.

Three more times, and it'll be complete."

Percival smiled faintly. "Vivienne, you're amazing."

Vivienne shot him a sideways glance, "Not as amazing as you. How did you know something was off with Aaron today?"

Vivienne, skilled in medicine, could usually tell at a glance if someone was poisoned or ill. But she

hadn't noticed anything amiss with Aaron today.

Nor had she found anything unusual in Mara's home, be it the fruit tea or anything else.

How could Percival have been so certain?

Percival pinched Vivienne's palm gently. "I've got a sixth sense."

"Mr. Wolf, that's not funny."

Percival raised an eyebrow playfully. "Actually, the drugs Mara bought were sold by Leopold."

"Of course not." Percival pulled Vivienne into his embrace. "Because I knew you wouldn't let anything happen."

Vivienne narrowed her eyes at Percival.

Any drug from his hand would be potent; Aaron must have been in agony.

She hadn't expected Mr. Wolf to be so cunning.

Not only had he manipulated the medication, but he had also orchestrated a small punishment for

Aaron and even involved Kenneth.

Such a childish scheme!

It was a ploy designed by Percival, specifically targeting Aaron.

Percival didn't deny it. Childish or not, he didn't care. He treated anyone who liked and had designs on

Vivienne with equal regard.

But getting close to his Vivienne was no walk in the park.

He couldn't lay a finger on Aaron since he was Vivienne's friend, apprentice, and the leader of the

Miller family, the one Vivienne had pinned all her hopes on.

To discipline him, Percival had to be subtle.

Vivienne found it both exasperating and amusing. A grown man in his thirties, getting into petty

squabbles with a kid.

Percival leaned his head on Vivienne's shoulder, gazing at her delicate profile, and couldn't resist

pecking her on the cheek.

Vivienne chuckled, "Yeah, Gillian's the key. Lately, she's been meddling in Vanguard Agency's affairs

more than a little. Leopold's been up in arms about it plenty of times."

Chapter 645

Gillian was stealthily tightening her grip on the reins of the Vanguard Agency, and since she was on an

equal footing with Vance, no one dared to voice their concerns. After all, she was sent by the top brass,

and they had no choice but to stomach her presence.

The tension was palpable on the training grounds, where Gillian's grudge had festered. She targeted

Thomas mercilessly, attempting to strip him of his squad leader privileges.

Her momentum was formidable and demanded attention.

Moreover, there was a strong possibility that F-Poison was lurking in her shadow.

That faceless entity could take any disguise, even assume Gillian's identity.

Should that prove true, the consequences would be dire.

Inside her apartment, Gillian walked in to find a scene of disarray.

Casting a disdainful glance at the shattered remains of Mara's bedroom door, she scoffed. "You can't even handle a simple task."

"Then you do it!" Mara retorted, tending to her wounds.

That Anna had really done a number on her, with no regard for the injuries she had inflicted.

Gillian rolled her eyes. "Keep an eye on Aaron and handle your own mess. Now, there's another thorn in our side; Anna's been reassigned to Elite University. No telling what mission she's on, so stay sharp."

At the mention of Anna's name, Mara snapped a cotton swab in frustration, "What's there to watch with her?"

"The boss said Anna is Vivienne's confidante. She's definitely up to something, either targeting you or Aaron. We're supposed to turn the Miller family against them, and this will put us at a huge

disadvantage. Be careful," Gillian lectured with strained patience.

"One minute, I'm stirring trouble for Aaron; the next, I'm shadowing Anna. Do I look like a tool to you?"

Gillian's expression darkened with anger. "Why all the questions? If you want revenge, shut up and

report any odd behavior from Anna immediately! And we shouldn't meet for a while; I don't have time

for you. Make Aaron ours, and don't tip off Anna. You might have already tipped Aaron off with today's

stunt. Be more cautious."

With those parting words, Gillian left.

Mara cursed under her breath and continued applying her ointment.

She wouldn't let Anna off the hook so easily.

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At Elite University, Aaron stood grim-faced in front of the graduate school building.

His presence drew curious stares from passing students; after all, he was a notable figure at the

university, although he was seldom seen outside of the finance department. His rare appearance today

piqued interest.

Mara emerged alone and smiled as she approached Aaron.

"Aaron, what brings you here? Waiting for me?"

Suddenly, Aaron pulled Mara away, quickening his pace.

"Hey, Aaron, what's the rush? You're hurting me!"

He dragged Mara to a secluded spot before releasing her hand with a forceful jerk.

Mara massaged her reddened wrist, tearfully looking at Aaron. "What are you doing?"

"What am I doing? Mara, I want to know what happened yesterday!"

Aaron wasn't a fool; he wouldn't lose consciousness without reason.

He had planned to meet with Vivienne while she was treating Mara's injuries, but instead, he ended up

locked in his room, unconscious.

If Mara weren't involved, it would be a miracle.

Mara rubbed her wrist. "I should be asking you about yesterday. I had decided to play matchmaker for

you and Vivienne, but why did you bring Kenneth into this? Did you want Percival to find out and kick

me out of Rivenwood?"

"I didn't bring Kenneth!" Aaron roared.

"Why are you yelling? If I hadn't fainted from pain yesterday, Kenneth and Anna would have beat me up. Look at my injuries, and you're blaming me?"

Mara lifted her skirt to reveal her bruises, "I'm trying to help you, and this is the thanks I get?"

Aaron examined Mara's leg wounds. "How did you get hurt like this?"

"How should I know?" Mara huffed, seating herself on a nearby bench. "You say you didn't bring Kenneth there, so who was it? He came with Anna. Maybe she brought him?"

"It's possible." Aaron knew about Kenneth's feelings for Anna.

It wasn't out of the question for them to arrive together, but what was Anna's motive?

Mara watched Aaron's expression and internally gloated before suggesting, "Back in Sea City, Anna and Percival were close. Maybe she's onto something?"

Aaron's gaze narrowed; Anna had indeed been seeking him out frequently under the guise of discussing graduate studies, but there was an air of surveillance about her.

Could it be Percival's doing?

Aaron was in the dark about Anna's connection to Vivienne, but he knew Anna was a Vanguard Agency

operative. To him, her ties to Percival seemed stronger.

He felt a sting of frustration.

Was Percival planting a spy right under his nose, intending to drive a wedge between him and

Vivienne?

Mara saw Aaron's stormy expression and knew she had him hooked. This was playing out perfectly.

With that, Mara limped away.

Aaron watched her departing figure, his eyes growing more inscrutable by the moment.

Meanwhile, Vivienne received an unexpected call from Ronald Brooks.

"Vivienne, do you have a moment? Can we meet, just the two of us?"

Ronald rarely called Vivienne, and when he did, it was never to meet alone; it was always with the

Brooks family.

This time, however, his tone was grave, and his request was unusual.

Vivienne nodded. "Sure, send me the address."

"Vivienne, over here!" Content belongs to Dramanovels.com

Vivienne threaded through the tables and took a seat. "What's going on?"

Glancing around to ensure their privacy, Ronald leaned in and retrieved a dossier from his briefcase.

A crease formed between Vivienne's brows. Had their hidden cameras already leaked?

This fast?

She flipped through the dossier, recognizing the hidden camera as the very item she had handed off to

Aaron.

"How long have you known about this?" Vivienne inquired, concern lacing her words.

"I discovered it this morning and called you right away," Ronald replied. "But there's something else

that's off. Ever heard of the Linklater family?"

Vivienne nodded with a trace of recognition in her gaze. "Dracon Linklater? What about him?"

Chapter 646

"Yeah, that's the guy," Ronald furrowed his brow, his voice tense. "He approached me and wanted to

partner up for some bionic tech venture. He knew way too much, which made me wonder if the whole

project had been compromised. You said it was top secret. I put him off for now, but then today, I

caught wind of some black market dealings."

The Churchills, the Pendletons, and the Brooks were the only families Vivienne ever trusted enough to

bring into the bionics project.

It wasn't surprising that Dracon had gotten wind of it—his family had their fingers in every pie.

But him seeking out the Brooks for a partnership? That was curious.

The Linklaters were never short on business and always had more profitable projects ongoing.

And yet, Dracon had set his sights on bionics—a field they hadn't shown interest in before.

More importantly, right after his little inquiry, the black market started buzzing with hidden camera trades.

"Leave this to me. You don't worry about it anymore," Vivienne said, tucking away the files.

Ronald nodded. "Alright, got it. If anything else comes up, I'll let you know."

After they split, Vivienne pulled out her phone and dialed Matthew, who was now running the show at Frostfire Intelligence Agency. The black market was under his jurisdiction.

"Check out who's supplying the cameras, and remember, don't spook them."

Matthew had been training recruits for so long that he was practically gathering dust. Thus, he jumped at the assignment.

Within half a day, he had a lead.

"Vivienne, got a name. The buyer's an old-timer on the market goes by 'Slick.' His supplier? The

Brooks. As for who Slick's distributing to, still working on that."

Vivienne frowned. "When's the next drop?"

"Tonight. Under the Rivenwood suburb overpass. I've got a team in place. You want him breathing or

not?" Matthew was thrilled to finally have a mission.

"Alive," Vivienne said gravely. "And unharmed."

"Roger that!" Matthew was all but rubbing his hands in glee.

That night at the Rivenwood suburb overpass, Slick stood in the shadows, his hawk-like gaze scanning

the area.

A car flashed its headlights thrice in the distance before going dark again.

Slick responded with three rapid flashes of his flashlight before snuffing it out.

Soon, a burly figure approached, carrying a nondescript box.

"Slick?"

"Sean."

Sean cracked a smile and opened the box under the faint light. Four tiny cameras glinted back.

Just as Slick reached out, Sean snapped the box shut.

"The cash?"

Slick chuckled, "Why don't you ask your buddy behind you for the money, Sean?"

Caught off guard, Sean was subdued before he could even see his attacker, and darkness claimed him.

Slick pocketed his flashlight and rubbed his hands together. "Mr. Matthew, you didn't have to come yourself."

Matthew produced an envelope from his jacket, a bank card inside.

"Same pin as always."

With a grateful nod, Slick took the envelope. "Thanks, Mr. Matthew. You know I'm always at your service."

As Slick was about to leave, lights flooded the area, encircling them.

Matthew drew his gun, pressing it against Slick's back. "An ambush, really?"

Slick dropped to his knees. "Mr. Matthew, I swear I didn't know about this!"

Two figures emerged from the light, guns aimed.

"National Intelligence Bureau. Nobody moves!"

Matthew was stunned for a moment. Why did this voice sound so familiar?

Stepping on the unconscious Sean with his hands behind his head, he asked, "Miss, have we met

before? I'm Matthew, and you are?"

"Matthew? You're Vivienne's protégé!"

As his eyes adjusted, Matthew recognized the face.

Damn, an old acquaintance.

"Astrid! What a surprise."

Astrid had been captive under Belle's thumb, and Matthew had been the one to handle it all. Naturally,

they knew each other.

But since Astrid returned to the Bureau and Matthew had been busy training agents at Frostfire, they

hadn't crossed paths until now.

Astrid motioned for her agents to lower their weapons and holstered her own gun. "What are you doing

here?"

Matthew nudged the unconscious Sean. "Just some business. You on a mission, Astrid?"

Astrid smiled, knowing Matthew's presence meant Vivienne's involvement.

"Is Vivienne around? I'd rather speak with her."

After reporting to Vivienne, Matthew escorted Astrid to her location.

"Vivienne, long time no see." Astrid greeted warmly, cutting to the chase. "What's the deal with Sean?"

Vivienne was forthright. "He's suspected of trafficking our company's proprietary tech."

Astrid nodded. "Figures you'd have Matthew on it. Did you know Sean has another identity?"

Vivienne's brow creased. "Enough to get the Bureau's attention. Is he a spy?"

Astrid knew that explaining the situation to Vivienne was almost unnecessary. Vivienne's sharp intellect

always seemed to connect the dots with little help.

"This guy Sean, he's known as Sean at Brooks Group, but his real name is Benjamin, and his code

name is Old-F. He's a transnational spy who used to be Alfred's subordinate. We've been on his trail for

a while, and we finally got wind that he'd be making a deal today. Never thought we'd bump into you

guys, though." Content of Dramanovels.com

Astrid's expression grew serious. "Vivienne, it seems Alfred's relationship with Belle wasn't as straightforward as it appeared."

"What do you mean?" Vivienne asked, her interest piqued.

"They were part of the same organization all along!"

Vivienne was taken aback. "Alfred was with GTO?"

"No, both of them," Astrid clarified. "They belong to the same spy ring, and the name of that organization is GTO."

"Do you have solid evidence?" Vivienne inquired, her curiosity now thoroughly engaged.

Chapter 647

Astrid gave a curt nod. "Yes, Alfred has confessed. We detected a virus in his system, which, according to him, is called ST-0. Apparently, it's a mandatory injection for all members of their spy ring. This virus alters their genetic makeup, enabling them to slip through searches undetected."

No wonder Astrid had never suspected Alfred during their courtship. His genetics had been altered.

ST-0 was obviously a precursor to ST-1. Both involved genetics!

Astrid continued, "Vivienne, looks like we're back in the game together."

Vivienne chuckled. "Yeah, teaming up again. Time to bring down this spy network once and for all!"

"And Benjamin..."

"Leave Benjamin to me. I'll get what I need from him, and then he'll be all yours by tomorrow morning.

Someone will be in touch."

Astrid understood. "Alright, I'll await your update."

...

In the Nine Mystics Society's interrogation room.

Benjamin gradually came to, realizing he was strung up from the ceiling, his feet dangling above a

bubbling cauldron.

He recoiled in shock. "This is torture! I demand human rights!"

Matthew strolled in, smirking at Benjamin's outcry. "Human rights? For a spy like you?"

Benjamin, no longer hiding his true colors, retorted, "Don't prisoners of war get decent treatment? You'll

regret this!"

The next moment, a lash from Matthew's whip cut across Benjamin's body without mercy. "You think

this is a place for pleasantries? Don't you know who I am? Spill it—who put you up to selling those cameras?"

The sting of the whip nearly sent Benjamin into the afterlife, and he quickly realized he wasn't dealing with the usual authorities.

Slick had set him up!

"I'll talk, I'll talk."

He could posture all he wanted with the official agencies, but against this rough justice, silence could be deadly.

"It's Dracon Linklater. He had me steal the Brooks family's cameras to leak bionic tech secrets, all for profit. He paid me handsomely, and I was going to run with the money, but then you caught me. I'm telling the truth!"

Matthew, frustrated he couldn't justify another lash, sat down, deflated.

This Benjamin really had no backbone, spilling the beans after just one whip. Clearly, GTO did not train their agents well at all. If it were him, he would never betray his organization!

"Got any proof?"

"Absolutely! I recorded every meeting with him on those cameras, got the videos to prove it."

Sighing, Matthew ordered Benjamin to be cut down.

Benjamin thought he was being set free, thanking Matthew profusely, "Thank you, boss. Does this mean I can go?"

Matthew nodded. "Sure, someone's here to pick you up."

As Astrid and her team entered, she greeted him, "Old-F, if you please."

Realizing his fate was still in the hands of the intelligence bureau, Benjamin sat down in defeat.

Astrid took Benjamin away for an overnight interrogation. He spilled everything, including his dealings with Dracon and previous hideouts.

Time was scarce. If GTO discovered Benjamin's capture, they might flee. Thus, Astrid immediately mobilized her team and messaged Vivienne.

On the road, Astrid received a call from Vance.

"Top brass has ordered Vanguard Agency to assist in capturing the GTO spy ring," Vance stated.

"Appreciated."

Astrid and Vance quickly agreed to cooperate, and the entire Vanguard Agency was on the move. The mission was so sudden that nobody knew the details, not even Gillian, who voiced her confusion to Vance as he, Micah, and Thomas were discussing tactics.

"What's going on here?"

Thomas was the first to retort. "Gillian, this isn't your concern."

"But I must report all Vanguard Agency activities to the higher-ups. Captain Thomas, remember that everything here goes through me!"

Vance slammed the file on the table. "Gillian, are you after my director's chair too?"

Startled, Gillian clarified, "No, but I have to be on this mission, Vance. You can't deny that."

Vance cursed under his breath at the meddling higher-ups. "Fine, you're in. But any slip-ups and it's on you."

Thomas wanted to object, but a shake of Micah's head silenced him. Gillian, being from headquarters, was an unavoidable addition to the mission.

Despite successfully joining the mission, Gillian still had no idea what this mission was about. Thus, she could only silently follow the others.

Thomas immediately gave the order. "First squad, send scouts to assess the bomb layout. Second squad, provide cover. We need them alive!"

Soren and Leopold each led their respective teams as they embarked on their mission under the cloak of darkness.

On the outskirts, Vivienne peered through her binoculars, keeping a vigilant eye on every move in the area.

The agents of the Nine Mystics Society were all in position, ready to catch any stragglers that might slip through the net.

She flashed a series of hand signals to her team, instructing them to disperse and begin defusing the bombs.

Back in the command vehicle, Gillian scrutinized the large screen and demanded, "What exactly are you all doing out there?" Read at Dramanovels.com

"Shut your trap," Thomas snapped, pressing his earpiece, "Anna, you've got thirty seconds—make it count!"

"Roger that," Anna responded.

The stronghold resembled a high-walled Holiday Resort, its exterior fortifications as imposing as the ancient walls of a bygone era.

The main entrance was grand but locked tight in the dead of night; a small gazebo with a tiny window stood guard, devoid of any revealing light, leaving it uncertain whether anyone was on watch.

According to Benjamin's intel, there was a secret passage known only to insiders.

The squad couldn't risk using any light sources; instead, they relied on touch and intuition to navigate.

Their sole guide was the memory of an infrared-simulated map they had studied before. Using this recollection, they made their way toward the bomb, ready to execute its silent disarmament.

Chapter 648

Vivienne was on the perimeter, her gaze locked to the thermal imager as she monitored Anna's progress through the darkened alley.

Percival was at her side, fingers dancing across the laptop keyboard. Three seconds later, he declared, "Vivienne, we're in." Pressing her earpiece, Vivienne called out, "Strike team, come in. Do you copy?"

The entire team, including Anna, was momentarily startled.

Through the earpiece, Anna tapped back in Morse code—Ms. Vivienne?

"That's right. Follow my lead. There are more bombs than your initial infrared scan detected. Tread carefully."

Everyone at the Vanguard Agency knew that Vivienne was Percival's fiancée, and they would heed her commands without question. And, of course, Percival would obviously be right by her side.

This brought an unspoken comfort to the strike team as they navigated the treacherous terrain.

“Alpha and Bravo, move left. Charlie and Delta, keep a 3-foot distance behind. Anna, take the others and advance from the nine o'clock position. Watch the walls—electrified nets are set up to alert the hostiles inside.”

The strike team executed Vivienne's orders flawlessly, avoiding numerous triggers and drawing ever closer to the bomb-laden stronghold.

Back in the command vehicle, Thomas watched the heat signatures move and immediately understood.

Percival and Vivienne were undoubtedly nearby. This meticulous, calculated approach was Vivienne's signature—Careful and deadly.

Thomas, who had spent years working alongside Percival and Vivienne, knew this all too well.

Moreover, the equipment in Vivienne's possession was far more advanced than that of the Vanguard Agency, revealing traps that had previously gone undetected.

With her guidance, Anna would be able to complete the mission much faster.

The National Intelligence Bureau, led by Astrid, was also in position, ready to provide support. Although they were not bomb disposal experts, they were more than capable of backing up the team.

Under Vivienne's direction, Anna swiftly defused the first bomb site. A few taps on her earpiece signaled — Alpha point clear. Vivienne nodded in satisfaction. Astrid's team received the signal and moved in.

Gillian, dutifully recording everything from the command vehicle, couldn't shake the feeling that something was amiss with this operation.

The combined forces of the National Intelligence Bureau and the Vanguard Agency suggested a significant threat. Could it be the GTO they were up against?

If GTO was compromised, she knew the punishments she would receive would be severe. She could not afford to gamble. Thomas, Micah, and Vance were deep in tactical discussion, oblivious to Gillian's movements. Gillian stealthily approached the command console and, without a sound, activated the external speakers.

When Thomas returned, he didn't notice the speakers were on—a device typically untouched unless they were ready to encircle and intimidate criminals. For a covert mission like this, flipping that switch was unthinkable.

Thomas picked up the microphone and began to speak, "Second squad, prepare to flank from the rear..." His words sent shock waves through the ranks.

Everyone was stunned, including Vivienne and Percival on watch outside, as well as Anna and Astrid in the midst of their delicate task.

Suddenly, an enormous explosion tore through the serene Holiday Resort. Starting from a hidden passage, in just two seconds, the entire resort was reduced to rubble.

Even the command vehicle shook violently, its special bulletproof glass shattering under the force of the blast. Glass shards flew everywhere, embedding themselves into the members of Vanguard Agency's special squad. Leopold and Soren sustained various injuries, their bodies peppered with countless fragments.

Vivienne and Percival, positioned on the outermost edge, felt a ringing in their ears, momentarily deafened. Inside the vehicle, bodies were strewn across the floor, with Gillian knocked unconscious against the machinery. The events unfolded in milliseconds.

Percival, steadying Vivienne, was the first to snap into action. He quickly established a connection with the command vehicle and bellowed, "Thomas, apprehend them!"

Thomas's ears were still ringing, Percival's voice echoing like a distant thunder in his mind.

"Thomas, apprehend them!" Percival shouted again. The urgency was clear; the enemy base had been alerted, and in the event of such destruction, there would undoubtedly be escape routes planned.

In this dire situation, they had to capture whoever they could—they could not allow every enemy to escape.

Thomas finally regained focus, grabbing his weapon as he descended from the command vehicle.

"Leopold, Soren, are you alive?"

Leopold rose from the debris, his legs, abdomen, and shoulders ravaged by glass. Blood seeped from his wounds. "I'm alive, damn it! I'm going after them!"

Soren stood up, more severely injured than Leopold, with a pierced abdomen, yet he still managed to get to his feet. "Not dead yet."

With that, Soren headed toward the secret passage.

His team was still in there.

"Captain, you go after them; I'll search for our people," Thomas commanded. "Move out and make sure we get all of our people out," he added.

The ten-person strike team couldn't afford a single loss.

Vivienne had regained her composure by then. She holstered her pistol, donned a bulletproof vest, and said, "Mr. Wolf, take the Nine Mystics Society to pursue them. I'll find Anna and Astrid."

"Be safe," Percival replied, planting a kiss on her forehead before they split up to carry out their respective tasks. Soren had already reached the secret passage, now a collapsed maze with sections vaporized by the bombs.

Struggling through the pain, Soren heaved pieces of debris aside, inching his way down the narrow path. "Anna, where are you?"

In the shadowed corridor, Anna lay unconscious, her body buried under a mound of bricks and shattered crockery, and her head bore a gash, oozing crimson.

By the time Soren found her, she was deeply unconscious, her breathing faint and labored.

"Anna, Anna!" Soren tapped Anna's cheek, hoping for a sign of life, but she was unresponsive. Without hesitation, he hoisted her onto his back.

The others had been located as well, but survivors were in the minority, and those unscathed were even fewer.

Soren swept a glance over the scene, his eyes brimming with scalding tears. "Gather their remains carefully. We need to get back before any secondary explosions!"

Vivienne was on the perimeter, having found Astrid, who was also out cold, her leg grotesquely fractured. Even worse, a shard of timber was impaled in her chest, perilously close to her heart—just 0.1 inch away!

Vivienne administered a life-saving pill to Astrid, but the timber lodged in her chest couldn't be removed; doing so would surely endanger her life.

At that moment, Soren emerged with Anna on his back, his face lighting up at the sight of Vivienne.

Vivienne caught sight of him, too, and started distributing her supply of life-saving pills. "I don't have many, so the critical cases first. We need to get the rest to the hospital fast. Mr. Wolf has already alerted the medical staff on standby. The severely injured go first; my mom's already waiting at the hospital."

"Understood," Soren said as he took the life-saving pill, handing it around until only one remained.

Chapter 649

Without hesitation, Soren fed Anna the last life-saving pill, ensuring she was quickly lifted onto a stretcher.

Meanwhile, Percival and Leopold rounded up every suspicious character within sight. Regardless of their protests and cries of innocence, they took no chances, erring on the side of caution rather than risk letting a spy slip through their grasp.

Those trained in the art of espionage were highly alert and masterful actors. Their disguises were so convincing that even the sharpest detective eyes might fail to discern their true nature.

Soon, they had filled two vans with captives, and Leopold, unable to stand, slumped beside Percival on one knee. "Hang in there, Leopold," Percival urged, supporting him with one arm to prevent him from slipping into unconsciousness.

Thomas had arrived with reinforcements, and the National Intelligence Bureau's backup had also reached the scene. The situation was finally under control, with the threat of a secondary explosion averted, and all the injured had been rushed to the hospital, including Gillian, who was now in the ICU.

By the time Soren was admitted to the hospital, he was unconscious, with shards of glass lodged perilously inside him. Karen, who took over his care, was stunned by the severity of his injuries.

"Frost, didn't you give him a life-saving pill?" Karen knew Vivienne always carried life-saving pills for emergencies, especially for missions like these, where they were stocked in abundance.

Given Soren's critical condition, it was unthinkable that Vivienne wouldn't have administered one.

Vivienne frowned slightly. "I did, but | think he shared them with his team. Mom, he's in your hands now. | need to check on Anna and Astrid."

"Okay," Karen responded without further inquiry. Time was of the essence, and every second counted.

After two nights and a day, Karen and Vivienne managed to save all the injured. For those who lost their limbs from the blast, they reattached limbs that could be salvaged. Unfortunately, for those whose limbs were lost, there was nothing more they could do.

The mission resulted in the capture of twenty-three individuals, one of whom turned out to be an innocent bystander. After receiving hefty compensation from Percival, he was released.

The remaining twenty-two were found with traces of ST-0, confirming their espionage without a doubt.

The Vanguard Agency suffered over a hundred injuries, and all members of the National Intelligence Bureau's team led by Astrid were wounded. The financial loss amounted to fifty million dollars.

Fortunately, the explosion had occurred away from residential areas, sparing civilians from harm.

The Rivenwood General Administration issued a stern rebuke to its entire staff, starting with Vance, who faced a severe reprimand and the cancellation of his special commendation.

The director of the Sea City headquarters was blunt over the phone. "Listen, Vance, you either find the person primarily responsible, or you pack up and return to your Edwards family!"

Vance knew the culprit was either Thomas or Gillian. Vance and Micah never got in close proximity to the command console and were discussing the plan on the desk at the side. The others were all occupied in their corresponding positions. Thomas and Gillian were the only two with access to the command console, while Thomas was responsible for using the microphone.

However, Vance was certain it wasn't Thomas, given his years of reliable service as Percival's right hand. Plus, Thomas had always been the most sensible and cautious team leader of the three, or else Vance would not have made him captain after Percival.

The only logical suspect remained Gillian, but without evidence—since the surveillance footage from the command vehicle was damaged in the explosion—the truth was still obscured.

In the hospital, Gillian slowly regained consciousness. She had suffered a severe blow to the back of her head, and despite surgery, the pain was excruciating.

A young nurse who had been by her side immediately called for a doctor when she awoke.

"You just need some rest and to avoid stress to prevent headaches and dizziness," the doctor advised after examining her and prescribed some medication before urging her to discharge herself. The hospital was overwhelmed, and with the ICU at capacity, even ordinary wards were in high demand. Given how light Gillian's injury was, she should not be occupying a bed.

"But doctor, my head hurts so badly. What if something happens after I leave? I can't be discharged."

"Your headache is just a postoperative reaction. If it's unbearable, ask a nurse for a painkiller injection, but you must leave. There are no beds left, and others are waiting. Please pack your things and leave by this afternoon. Thank you for your cooperation," the doctor replied, his patience worn thin by the relentless influx of patients.

Gillian continued to argue, but the doctor ignored her and left.

Meanwhile, Vivienne was still watching over things in the ICU. Anna and Astrid's situation had yet to improve, and Soren and Leopold were still unconscious.

Outside the ICU, Dorian's family and Griffin waited anxiously, with Cordelia's eyes swollen from crying.

Astrid hadn't been home for over a year, and even phone calls were rare due to her job commitments. No one anticipated that their next reunion would be in a hospital, seeing her this severely injured.

Trying to comfort Cordelia, Karen handed her a calming pill. "Cordelia, don't worry. Astrid will be fine. With Frost and me here, nothing will go wrong."

Dorian could only offer words of solace, feigning a calm he was far from feeling. He was the rock of the family, the one who couldn't afford to crumble.

Percival, leading the Nine Mystics Society, was still hot on the trail of the spies who had slipped through their grasp. From the confessions of those they had caught, at least five were still at large.

Most crucially, each of them had had some level of contact with the elusive F-Poison. None had seen the face behind the name, but they had pieces of information that could help track this shadowy figure's movements.

Three days passed, and Anna and Astrid had finally found some stability; Leopold had come to, and Soren was still out cold, but the danger to his life had diminished.

Vivienne had been moved from the ICU. With the patients stable, it was time to go after the mastermind. Vivienne stormed into the Vanguard Agency, demanding to see the surveillance from the day in question.

Micah stepped in her way. "Vivienne, we haven't been able to restore the surveillance data yet. We're not sure of the specifics. Can you give us a couple more days?"

"I can't wait," Vivienne snapped, yanking a technician from their chair. "If such a simple task is beyond you, what's the point of the Vanguard Agency's existence?"

Micah was left speechless. Vivienne had previously given the agency the benefit of the doubt, thanks to Percival and Karen. But now, she was merciless.

And no one could argue with her; after all, to someone of Vivienne's caliber, this was indeed a trivial matter.

Chapter 650

Three minutes later, the demolished surveillance footage had been patched back together.

On the screen, it showed Gillian approaching the command console while Thomas stepped away to discuss tactics. However, because she had her back to the camera and her body obstructed the view of the console, it was unclear what she was actually doing.

The entire incident lasted a mere three seconds.

Fury blazed in Vivienne's eyes as she rose from her seat, storming towards the door.

Vance arrived at that moment, along with Micah, trying to hold her back.

"Vivienne, let us handle this. It's a Vanguard Agency matter," Vance urged.

"Yeah, you head back. We didn't see Gillian touch the console in the footage. Let's investigate this properly," Micah added.

Gillian was sent from the headquarters, and if there was blame to be assigned, it would have to come from the top. Besides, with Gillian already injured, they couldn't very well take harsh measures.

Vance and Micah were certainly angry, but as the directors, the linchpins of the entire Rivenwood Vanguard Agency, they couldn't act rashly.

But Vivienne, inflamed with rage, was not someone these two old-timers could easily restrain, even though these two were the second and third in command back in the heyday of the Vanguard Agency.

Vivienne grabbed each man by the wrist and twisted easily, and with a sickening snap, both Micah and Vance's arms were dislocated.

The two men cried out in pain, each standing rooted to the spot.

Coincidentally, this happened right under the watchful eye of the surveillance camera.

“See that? We tried to stop her, but we couldn't.”

The two directors, now seated on the floor, cried out in pain, and nobody else dared to step forward.

At that moment, Gillian was sitting in the secretarial department, her head wrapped in a bandage, portraying the image of a hard- working employee braving through her injuries.

In truth, her wounds were minor, and it was merely a facade.

Her greatest concern now was whether the technicians restoring the surveillance footage would uncover her act. In the heat of the moment, she hadn't had time to prepare a better cover and had used her body to block the view.

She hoped she hadn't given herself away.

Fortunately, even if the surveillance was fixed, it would have to go through the secretarial department. Even if it captured her, there were ways to deal with it.

With this thought, Gillian pulled out her lipstick for a touch-up. She had chosen a muted rose shade today, something that made her appear more pitiable.

Then, with a loud bang, the door to the secretarial department was kicked open, the sturdy door slamming to the floor. Everyone jumped in fright.

Gillian's hand shook, smearing lipstick across her face.

Before she could react, she felt her neck seized, and the next second, she was slammed onto the desk.

The lipstick shattered against her face, but ironically, the color was so realistic it looked like rose petals stuck to her skin. Gillian cried out in pain, "Who's that?"

Looking up, she met Vivienne's furiously enraged face.

Aslap resounded, and Gillian spun a full 360 degrees, staggering a few steps before steadying herself against the desk. "Vivienne, what are you doing!?"

"What the hell do you think you're doing!?"

Vivienne followed with a kick, sending Gillian flying through the air, crashing against the wall like a ragdoll.

But that wasn't the end. Vivienne grabbed a tall planter nearby and hurled it at Gillian.

Gillian was terrified; the planter was so heavy it took two special agents to carry it inside. Vivienne was lifting it with one hand! As it came crashing towards her, Gillian scrambled away with all the human potential for survival.

Still, the planter hit her ankle.

Gillian cried, tears streaming down her face. "Vivienne, have you lost your mind? You know this is illegal! Are you trying to kill me?"

Vivienne cracked her knuckles, the sound echoing through the room. "Killing you would be too kind." With that, she lunged forward, pinning Gillian to the ground.

Then, the sound of slaps echoed through the secretarial department like a hailstorm. Everyone was silent, petrified by the noise that reverberated throughout the agency.

Vivienne rarely resorted to such brute force to discipline someone. But this time, her fury was real. Only such raw violence could quench the fire of her anger.

Gillian's actions had put hundreds at risk. Leopold, Anna, Astrid, and Soren were still in the ICU because of her. To Vivienne, what Gillian did was as good as a death wish. Gillian could barely speak, feeling her cheeks swell. Her eyes were squinted to slits by the swelling, blurring her vision.

After Vivienne had her fill of slapping, she rose, dragging Gillian by the leg all the way to where Vance was.

Throughout the ordeal, every desk, door frame, and step was acquainted with Gillian's battered body. The severity of her injuries was such that even Mara, upon seeing her, couldn't empathize.

Finally, feeling the dragging stop, and with what felt like a crushed ankle, Gillian scrambled away, pointing at a nearby column, shouting, "Don't touch me. I'm calling the police; I'm going to have you arrested!"

Vivienne stood to her right, looking down at her with disdain.

Vance and Micah, no longer in pain, stood to view the woman, now barely recognizable. "Is that... the tech department's Chubby?"

"No, no, that looks like Sophia from the secretarial department!"

Vivienne casually pulled up a chair and sat down, "That's Gillian."

Vance winced. "What a mess. How did she end up like this?"

Micah let out a sigh. "I mean, it's like she is completely unrecognizable now."

Vivienne stretched her long legs out and casually rested them on the table in front of her. "So, directors, what's the plan about catching Gillian sneaking up to the command console on the cameras?"

Vance couldn't help but chuckle, thinking, "Looks like you've already taken care of it, haven't you?"

Micah beamed with a mix of pride and nostalgia. "You've done a stellar job! You've got your mother's touch, that's for sure!" He thought.

Though they thought as much, they knew they had to maintain appearances.

"So, Gillian, care to explain yourself?" Vance asked.

Gillian knew the jig was up the moment she was questioned, but she also knew they lacked any concrete evidence against her. Looks like using her body to block the camera's view was the right move after all.

"What are you talking about? | don't know anything. | hit my head on the equipment, and then this bitch had the nerve to rough me up. | can't remember a thing. What exactly do you want me to explain?"