

Million-Dollar 91

Chapter 91

Cloudcrest High School.

After the last class, Coral and Arabella left the classroom together.

Arabella held her phone in her hand, distraught. Recently, Doreen had been bombarding her with calls, saying that Faye was seriously ill and hoping she could visit. But she didn't go.

She had seen the prescription written by Dr. William herself. It was for a disfigured patient who had been cured. She was confident that the prescription was correct. However, Doreen insisted that Faye had developed symptoms of high fever, vomiting, and diarrhea after taking her medication. This infuriated her.

Faye's illness was her own problem. Why should Arabella be held responsible?

At first, she patiently explained a few times when Doreen called her. But when the calls became frequent, she got impatient and decided not to answer them anymore.

However, since noon, her phone hadn't rung. A sudden unease was gnawing at her.

Could something really have happened to Faye?

"Arabella, what's up with you? You seem a bit out of it." Coral noticed her unusual mood and asked.

Arabella was brought back to reality by her voice and shook her head with a smile. "Nothing, I was just thinking about the problem the teacher talked about today."

Then she changed the subject. "Coral, how's your uncle doing? Still got his job?"

Upon hearing this, Coral immediately got upset. "Don't even mention it. My uncle got sacked and our family business has run into some issues. My brother is staying at home, not going to work."

Arabella was surprised. "Why? What happened?"

"I'm not really sure. My parents didn't tell me anything about it. But the atmosphere at home is really bad. My parents and brother are always looking gloomy. I don't even dare to talk to them."

"Does it have anything to do with my sister?" Arabella asked.

"I overheard my parents talking. They mentioned the Ellington family. I guess Mr. Ellington is helping Vivienne." Coral said angrily. "Arabella, I really feel bad for you. You're clearly the best. You're the one who deserves Mr. Ellington. Just because Vivienne is the real daughter of the Hawthorn family, you have to give up your fiancé to her."

Arabella smiled, "Who knows? Maybe Mr. Ellington will change his mind in the future? I'll just focus on

my studies for now. Maybe with time, Mr. Ellington will notice how great I am!"

After their conversation, they said goodbye at the school gate and got into their own cars.

Tranquil Estates.

Gabriel, looking worn out, slumped on the sofa and pleaded with Coral's father, Brandon Lockwood.

"Brandon, can't you help me out? I'm at the end of my rope. If I don't sort out my job situation, my family is screwed."

"How do you expect me to help?" Brandon replied grimly. "Your actions have landed the Lockwood family business in unprecedented trouble. Even Jaylan was almost affected. His position was in jeopardy. We've got our own problems to deal with. How can we possibly help you?"

"All I did was check into Ms. Vivienne's background at Coral's request. Who knew her background was so strong? Now, not only did I lose my job, but my wife also got fired. We've got two kids to feed. We're barely scraping by on a meager income. If you guys don't help out, we're done for."

"How old are you? You just believe whatever Coral tells you? She falsely accused Ms. Vivienne of theft not too long ago. And now she's stirring up new trouble. She doesn't know what she's doing, but do you? Even a layman like me knows that your department has a verification system. One check would

tell you whether a diploma is fake!"

Brandon's face was thunderous. "But what did you do? You didn't even bother checking and just went straight in. You wanted to start an investigation without any evidence, and you were personally questioned by Rivenwood's higher-ups. If they didn't fire you, who else would they fire?"

Mrs. Lockwood on the side was also full of disappointment. "Gabriel, I told you before. The Lockwood family's position is hard-earned. I asked you to keep a low profile, but you just wouldn't listen. We used our connections to get you this job, and you took it for granted, acting high and mighty at work, as if you were invincible. You think we didn't know?"

"I..."

"Don't you dare try to defend yourself!" Mrs. Lockwood cut him off angrily. "Even though Coral asked you this time, can you assure me that you didn't have selfish motives?"

Gabriel hung his head in silence.

He did have selfish motives. He wanted to use this situation to gain some benefits. The Hawthorn family is loaded. To protect Vivienne, they would naturally have to fork over some money.

But who knew that Vivienne's background was so powerful? She called the chief of Rivenwood directly.

He didn't get any benefits, but instead, he got into big trouble.

"You repeatedly ignored our advice. Now, you've caused trouble not just for yourself but also for the Lockwood family. If you didn't come to see us today, I was planning to come to you. I want to ask you, what grudge does the Lockwood family have against you? What good did we do for you?"

Gabriel looked up, his face full of confusion. "Isn't Percival a loser? Where did he get such a huge capital?"

"You're the real screw-up!" Mrs. Lockwood retorted, standing up in fury. "The Ellington family has already announced that Percival will be taking over the family business. Percival, who you dimwits see as a waste of space, is actually a diamond in the rough, just waiting to shine. You messed with his fiancée, how could he possibly let that slide? And even if he was a screw-up, he's still the Ellington family's golden boy. If his fiancée is harassed, how could Richard just stand by and do nothing? What's going on in that head of yours? Can't you think about the consequences before you act?"

Gabriel slumped onto the couch, "So there's no other way out?"

"There is. Go apologize to Vivienne. Not just you, but all of us, after Coral finishes school. Whether the

Lockwood family can weather this storm depends on Vivienne's attitude," Mrs. Lockwood said sternly.

She had never met Vivienne, but she had heard a lot about her.

There were many versions, saying she was a country bumpkin, uneducated, disowned by the

Hawthorn family, and so on.

Some even compared Vivienne to Arabella, saying Vivienne was inferior.

But she thought all those were pure bull.

Regardless of anything else, just look at the last incident where Coral accused Vivienne of theft.

Vivienne was able to garner support from so many influential people, which was no simple feat.

This time even the leadership of the related government departments in Rivenwood was alarmed.

Could Vivienne be an ignorant country girl?

And also, a sixteen-year-old with two PhDs, how many of them could you find in the country?

Therefore, if they hoped for the Lockwood family to be unscathed, they had to seek Vivienne's

forgiveness.

"I get it now."

Chapter 92

When Coral got home, Gabriel was already gone.

She saw her parents sitting in silence on the sofa. She wanted to say something, but the vibe was off, so she tiptoed towards her room.

But as soon as she took one step, Brandon's angry voice boomed, "Stop!"

Coral instantly stopped, looking at Brandon with terror, "What's up, Dad?"

She knew that her actions had caused Uncle to lose his job and trouble for Vivienne, which had plunged the Lockwood family into crisis. Her parents were upset, and she knew they were going to hold her accountable.

Days passed and her parents hadn't mentioned the incident. She thought they wouldn't blame her, but now, she was starting to worry.

Her mom was usually pretty laid back and spoiled her, but her dad, oh boy, when he was angry, it was terrifying.

"Kneel down!" Brandon roared.

Coral was shocked. She wanted to argue back, but seeing the fury in Brandon's eyes, she lowered her head and obediently knelt down.

Jaylan Lockwood, hearing the commotion, came out. He glanced at Coral, but didn't say a word.

Yeah, this little sister definitely needed some discipline.

"Whack!" Brandon's hand came down on Coral's face, "You ignorant child! I have always been upright and never harmed others, but I never expected to raise such a troublemaker like you!"

Coral, clutching her face, looked at Brandon in disbelief.

No matter what wrongs she had done in the past, her father had never hit her. This slap was a heavy one, and she could feel her face swelling up.

Feeling wronged, she suddenly stood up, crying and glaring at Brandon, "Dad, you hit me? What did I do wrong, why did you hit me?"

"Whack!"

Before Coral could finish, she got slapped again, this time by Mrs. Lockwood.

Coral looked at her mother in disbelief.

Her father hitting her was one thing, but her mother too!

"We've spoiled you rotten! You're so reckless, and you still don't know to repent. You've really let me

down." Mrs. Lockwood said coldly.

Coral had never seen Mrs. Lockwood so stern before, and she was a bit dazed, "Mom! Why? Why is this happening? I don't understand!"

Wasn't it just asking Uncle for a little favor?

Vivienne's diploma was real, she had no idea! Who would've thought that someone raised in Emerald Monastery would have a double degree doctorate at the age of sixteen?

Uncle got fired, and she felt guilty. This wasn't what she wanted to see, but her parents didn't understand her and even hit her.

"You don't understand?" Mrs. Lockwood said sternly, "The Lockwood family's company is on the brink of collapse, your uncle and aunt have lost their jobs, and your brother is under investigation and suspended from work."

Coral lowered her head, not saying a word.

"All these problems, you caused them all, and you're saying you don't understand?" Mrs. Lockwood was filled with disappointment.

Her parenting style was not strict. As a girl, she wanted Coral to have a privileged upbringing, to be

loved and taught the right values. But she never imagined her daughter would go astray. This was her responsibility.

"Your father started from nothing and founded the Lockwood Group. Your brother studied until two in the morning every night to earn his current job. Do you know how hard it was for our family to get to where we are today? Your brother is transparent and fair in his dealings. He never acts out of line. Last time when you framed Vivienne for theft, your brother almost lost his job. Now, because of you again, your brother is under investigation. Can't you stand to see the success of our family?"

Luckily, the last time Coral framed Vivienne for theft, Jaylan took Vivienne back for investigation. It was a normal procedure, but because Coral was his own sister, he was suspended from work, but he was quickly reinstated.

But this time was different. This time was an investigation!

Being investigated as a law enforcement officer meant that the higher-ups suspected Jaylan of wrongdoing!

Once caught, being suspended was the least of his worries. Jail was the worst.

Luckily, Jaylan was upright and loved his job. He never broke the rules, so there was nothing to find even if they did check.

But Coral needed to be taught a lesson.

"No, how could I not want to see our family succeed? I, I just..." Coral was flustered.

She really didn't think things would get this serious.

"You just couldn't stand seeing Arabella being bullied, you just wanted to stand up for Arabella, you just thought Arabella was the real lady and Vivienne didn't deserve to be!" Mrs. Lockwood finished Coral's sentence.

Coral looked at Mrs. Lockwood in surprise, "Mom, how do you know all this?"

Indeed, everything she did against Vivienne was for Arabella.

Arabella was her friend, and she couldn't bear to see Arabella being bullied.

"I've lived for over forty years, what tricks haven't I seen? Do you think Arabella's little schemes can fool me?"

Coral stared at her in surprise, "I don't get it! Don't you like Arabella?"

Mrs. Lockwood glanced at Coral, expressionlessly saying, "I don't like Arabella at all. The reason I'm

friendly to her when she comes over is because you consider her a friend. I don't want to upset you, so

I let you two be friends."

She didn't like Arabella from the first time she met her. She felt Arabella was too manipulative.

Actually, she wanted to stop Coral from being friends with Arabella, but she loved Coral and didn't want to upset her, so she let it slide.

When Coral framed Vivienne for theft last time, she made it clear that Coral should not be friends with Arabella anymore and even grounded her at home for a few days.

But then she got busy with the company and didn't have time to deal with Coral.

Who would've thought that not much time had passed, and trouble arose again.

"What the heck? Arabella's so smart and gentle. Everybody wants to be her friend. Mom, how come you don't like her?"

Coral was completely blindsided. Her mom didn't like Arabella?

But she truly didn't get it. Wasn't Arabella great?

Mrs. Lockwood had planned to give Coral a stern lecture, but seeing her bewildered face, she sighed

instead, "Coral, think about it, does Arabella really consider you a friend? Doesn't she always ask for your help to solve her problems?"

"She's my friend. Is it wrong for me to help her?" Coral didn't think she was wrong.

"There's nothing wrong with helping friends, but Arabella isn't worth it. Take how she keeps saying

Vivienne is targeting her. If that's true, why did Vivienne's family move out? Also, if Arabella is so great,

why wouldn't the Ellington family want her, but pick Vivienne who grew up in the countryside instead?

Do you think Richard is a fool?"

"Richard has seen more people than the food you've eaten. He chose Vivienne over Arabella, which

means there's something wrong with Arabella. Moreover, Vivienne earned dual doctorate degrees at

sixteen, that's an honor. If it weren't for Arabella stirring up trouble, wouldn't you have thought Vivienne

was impressive too?"

Coral didn't answer.

It seemed to be true.

Her bad impression of Vivienne was all because Arabella always acted like a victim in front of her,

including this time. Arabella claimed that Vivienne's certificates might be fake, so she got her uncle to help.

"Today is the last time we'll talk about this. Tomorrow we're going to apologize to Vivienne. Think hard about it. If you get it, come with us. And about Arabella, I hope you can make the right judgment. Is such a friend worth it?"

With that, Mrs. Lockwood went into the room with Brandon.

Jaylan glanced at Coral, said nothing, and also went into his room.

Chapter 93

The next day.

After breakfast, Vivienne intended to head to the Baker family's place first for Faye's acupuncture treatment.

Just as she got to the entrance of the community, she spotted Percival.

Today, he was alone without Thomas by his side.

Seeing Vivienne, Percival headed over to her, "Let's go, I'll give you a lift to the Baker family."

"Aren't you supposed to have your physical education class for second period?" Vivienne asked, surprised.

Originally, the first class yesterday afternoon was physical education, but since Vivienne had to treat

Faye, Percival accompanied her and rescheduled the physical education class to today.

"The students are not exactly thrilled about physical education, let's push it to next week."

Once the students of Class Eighteen were fully committed to studying, they had no interest in physical

education. They would rather spend all their time studying. A physical education class was scheduled

yesterday and everyone was visibly unhappy. But when they heard that the class was rescheduled to

today, they were overjoyed.

After some thought, Percival switched the class back.

Vivienne was left speechless.

Were they the two people who had the easiest time earning their wages? She suddenly felt a little guilty

about her salary

Without further words, Vivienne got in the car.

She sat in the passenger seat and Percival buckled her seatbelt for her. His face was close and he

smelled faintly good.

His slender fingers brushed against Vivienne's hand unintentionally. Oddly, her heartbeat quickened.

"You can nap for a bit. I'll wake you up when we get there." Percival's voice was as pleasant as a solo melody.

Vivienne lifted her droopy eyes briefly, her long lashes fluttered, and she nodded.

She closed her eyes, suppressing her pounding heart.

She didn't really want to sleep, but the atmosphere in the car made her feel a bit uneasy.

She didn't feel anything towards Percival, but every time they were alone, there was this undefined sentiment.

It was strange. She barely knew Percival, yet there was this sense of familiarity, and being with him calmed her.

They didn't speak for the rest of the journey.

The car stopped in front of the Baker family's mansion. The door was open.

The housekeeper was nowhere to be seen.

Just as Vivienne and Percival entered, they heard a voice scolding, "You have the nerve to come? My daughter was nearly killed by you. I haven't even settled the score with you yet, and you have the

audacity to come to us? Get out now! Or else, don't blame me for being rude!"

It was Doreen.

Vivienne and Percival exchanged a look, wisely stepping back and staying at the entrance.

Then, another voice came from inside, "Ms. Doreen, I came out of kindness to check on Ms. Faye, and

this is how you treat me? You were the ones who asked me to treat her in the first place. What, now

that she's treated, you don't know me anymore?"

Arabella usually put on a pleasant front, but she was getting angry now. Her face darkened as she

questioned Doreen.

"I never lay hands on young people. Are you trying to provoke me?" Doreen's voice was stern, "If it

weren't for not wanting to affect Faye's condition, I would have confronted you yesterday. And you dare

to question me?" Doreen shouted

"I can't believe you're this kind of person. Ungrateful. While I was treating Ms. Faye, I didn't ask for

anything in return, did I? You don't appreciate what I did, fine, but to insult me? If you continue this, I

might just make this public and let everyone see what kind of people you really are!" Arabella said.

She was really angry!

Since Doreen didn't call her again after yesterday, she started to feel very anxious. She worried that if something happened to Faye, the Bakers would blame her. That's why she took a leave today to check on Faye.

But the moment she got here, she was scolded by Doreen. How could she not be angry?

"Shameless!" Before Doreen could speak, Mia, who had been following Bertha, couldn't hold back,

"You've been living with the Hawthorn family for so many years, how could you be so brazen? Ms. Faye took your medicine and her condition worsened. Doreen called you numerous times to come and check, but you refused, even not answering the phone in the end."

"Do you know, Ms. Faye nearly lost her life? If it weren't for Ms. Vivienne, you might have been arrested by the police!"

Arabella paused, then scoffed, "I see, so you're doing this because I'm an adopted daughter, you think I'm not as important as my sister, so you're helping her to steal my credit?"

Doreen and Mia stared in disbelief, they never thought someone could be this shameless.

It was clearly her own mistake that nearly resulted in severe consequences, yet she had the audacity to

accuse Vivienne of stealing her credit?

What kind of person was this?

Arabella was indeed a renowned talent! Her way of thinking was incomparable, and her ability to distort the facts was top-notch.

"What nonsense are you talking about?" Doreen shouted in disbelief, "You made a mistake with the prescription, almost costing my daughter's life, yet instead of reflecting on your actions, you have the gall to blame others? You make me furious!"

"Isn't that the case?" Arabella laughed coldly, "The prescription I gave was from my teacher Dr. William, there was nothing wrong with it. The fever and vomiting were normal reactions, it would pass and get better. You asked my sister to treat Faye at this time, isn't that stealing my credit?"

"You, you really are..." Doreen was so angry she couldn't find the words to say.

In retrospect, she was somewhat at fault.

It was her who heard that Arabella had cured Percival and hastily invited Faye over for treatment. She didn't investigate in detail and just trusted Arabella's words.

Now, what Arabella said made sense, and she found herself unable to refute.

"You have to give me an explanation, or else, I won't let this slide." Arabella said coldly.

Doreen was fuming mad, and if you really dig into it, Arabella seemed to have a point.

Was she seriously out of moves against Arabella?

Just then, Bertha's voice echoed from outside, "Ms. Vivienne, Mr. Ellington, why are you two just

standing there? Come on in!"

Bertha, fresh from her morning workout, was taken aback to find Vivienne and Percival loitering at the

doorstep with sour faces.

She invited Vivienne and Percival in, and upon spotting Arabella, her eyebrows shot up and her face

took a serious turn.

She was about to blow her top, but Arabella beat her to it, storming over to Vivienne and demanding,

"What the hell did I do wrong? Why are you treating me like this? That guy was not even your save,

why are you stealing my thunder?"

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Vivienne lifted her head, a hint of coldness in her eyes.

She stared at Arabella for a moment, then suddenly smirked, "So what if I stole your thunder?"

Bertha and Doreen were taken aback. Since when did Vivienne become so blunt?

It was clearly her who saved Faye. Wasn't she falling right into Arabella's trap by admitting this?

Arabella was equally surprised by Vivienne's response.

She knew very well that it was her treatment that almost killed Faye.

She didn't know how Vivienne had such superior medical skills, but if it wasn't for Vivienne, the Baker family would never have let her off the hook.

But luckily, Vivienne happened to save Faye after her. So she couldn't blame her for turning the tables.

After all, Vivienne was just a country bumpkin. Who would believe her?

With this thought, Arabella asked angrily, "Why would you do this? What good does it do you to harm me? Remember, you're also a daughter of the Hawthorn family. Whatever happens to either of us, it's not good for you, nor for the Hawthorn family."

Vivienne put her hands in her pockets and looked down at her, "Since when did I give a hoot about the Hawthorn family?"

She had an aura of power that made Arabella seem small in comparison.

Especially when she looked into Vivienne's eyes, Arabella always felt like Vivienne could see right through her.

She instinctively stepped back, then retorted, "Yes, you cut off ties with the Hawthorn family, but you still carry their blood. Your father is the legitimate son of your grandmother. That's an undeniable fact. Your wellbeing is tied to that of the Hawthorn family."

"Also, since you returned, I haven't done anything wrong to you. Last time you made Mr. Ellington believe that I stole your credit. Now you're blatantly taking mine. That's a bit too much, don't you think?"

"Hmph," Vivienne flicked a stray hair off her cheek, a wicked grin on her face, "So what?"

"You!" Arabella was furious, "I just wanted an apology from you and an explanation to Ms. Doreen and the others. But if you're going to act like this, don't blame me for not being nice."

Vivienne chuckled, "What are you gonna do?"

Seeing her nonchalant attitude, Arabella turned to Doreen, "Mrs. Doreen, aren't you going to explain this to me?"

Doreen was already fuming, "I'm already being nice not to confront you, and you still want an

explanation? Is this how the 'talented lady' of Havenwood behaves?"

Arabella, not bothered by the insult, smirked, "I see how you feel. If anything happens in the future, don't blame me for not considering our families' relationship."

With that, Arabella turned around and left.

After she left, Doreen turned to Vivienne, "Ms. Hawthorn, why did you admit to stealing Arabella's credit? You were the one who saved Faye. Aren't you just causing trouble for yourself by saying this?"

Vivienne smiled faintly, "What's life without a little trouble?"

Doreen was taken aback, "What do you mean?"

Without answering, Vivienne said, "I'll attend to Ms. Faye's acupuncture first."

She had been away from the mountains for a while. Did everyone think she had become fragile? How

amusing! After the acupuncture session, Vivienne and Percival left. The moment they left the Baker

family, Cordelia called, "Vivienne, don't come home tonight. Find somewhere else to stay." There was a

hint of urgency in Cordelia's voice. Vivienne frowned, "What happened?" "Arabella posted online that

you and the Baker family ganged up on her. She claimed that she was the one who cured the patient

but you took the credit. Because she's an adopted daughter of the Baker family and has no value to

them, they abandoned her. Her post went viral in minutes. Some people are throwing paint at our house. I'm worried you might run into them, so just lay low for a while. Your father and I will handle this." Vivienne's eyes hardened, "I'll be right there."

After hanging up, Vivienne asked Percival to take her back to Tranquil Estates. There were hundreds of people gathered at the community gate. The dozen or so security guards couldn't stop them. Some even rushed in. When Percival's car approached, someone recognized it, "That's Percival's car! Stop them!" A crowd quickly surrounded the car.

Percival looked coldly at the crowd and said to Vivienne, "Stay in the car. I'll handle this."

Vivienne smiled, "Mr. Ellington, I may be young, but I can take care of myself." Before Percival could respond, Vivienne had already opened the car door and stepped out. Fearful that the crowd might harm Vivienne, Percival quickly followed and shielded her behind him.

"Vivienne, you bitch! You seduced Arabella's fiancé, ruining their marriage, and now you're stealing her credit. Do you really think no one will stand up for Arabella?"

"Arabella is being bullied by you guys and you're here playing lovebirds. Disgusting!"

"Get out of Havenwood, we don't want you here!" As the person finished, a water bottle was thrown at Vivienne.

Vivienne was just about to make her move when Percival beat her to it, kicking the mineral water bottle flying. He glared at the bottle tosser who shouted, "Guys, get 'em! Beat up this shameless couple!"

Percival shielded Vivienne behind him and rushed into the crowd swiftly. These were all ordinary folks and Percival had them floored in a few moves.

Watching Percival's back, Vivienne felt a warmth in her heart. She was used to solving all her problems by herself, but since coming to Havenwood, it seemed like she always had someone looking out for her.

Percival shot them a cold glance, then made a phone call. "Send someone over to Tranquil Estates."

After hanging up, Percival took Vivienne by the hand and they walked into the neighborhood. The people outside would be handled by others. They had to check on Dorian and Cordelia first. Vivienne's house was trashed, paint splattered all over the door and the words "Die Vivienne!" scrawled on the wall.

Vivienne looked at the scene before her, radiating an icy aura.

Percival held her hand tightly. "Don't worry! I'm here with you."

Vivienne looked up into his eyes. After a pause, she gave a small smile. "Okay."

Truth be told, she hadn't feared anything since her mother passed away.

But unexpectedly, she found herself wanting to lean on Percival.

The code lock was damaged by the paint, so Vivienne took out her key to unlock the door.

Inside, Cordelia was anxiously staring at her phone. Dorian hadn't returned yet.

She was afraid these people would barge in and was quite freaked out.

Seeing Vivienne walk in, she rushed over reproachfully. "Why are you back? Didn't I tell you not to come back yet? Get out of here, find a safe place to hide. Those people outside have gone mad. What if you get hurt?"

Vivienne looked at her worried face and felt a pang in her heart. "Don't worry, I'll handle this."

Cordelia wanted to say more, but Vivienne took out her phone and dialed a number.

The call connected quickly. Vivienne simply said coldly, "Get everyone moving. Put the full pressure on the Hawthorn family. I want to see them bankrupt within the hour!"

She paused, then added, "Remember, the entire Hawthorn family! Don't let anyone connected to them off the hook!"

Chapter 95

Percival shot Vivienne a glance, a flicker of light barely noticeable in his deep-set eyes.

He chuckled lightly, this little missy didn't need his protection.

When Vivienne hung up, Cordelia asked in surprise, "Vivienne, who were you just on the phone with?"

How come she heard Vivienne say she was going to bankrupt the Hawthorn family within an hour?

Even if the Hawthorn family was in a tight spot, they wouldn't go bankrupt just because Vivienne said so.

Was Vivienne talking out of her hat because she was mad? Or did Cordelia mishear?

"Cordelia, I feel a little hungry, anything to eat in the kitchen?" Vivienne didn't explain, just sat leisurely on the couch. When facing Cordelia, her gaze didn't have the same dominance as before, but rather a gentleness.

"I thought you wouldn't be back for lunch, so I didn't prepare anything." Cordelia's attention immediately

shifted towards the kitchen, "I'll cook up some spaghetti for you, Percival, do you want some?"

"Thanks, Cordelia." Percival nodded, sat down next to Vivienne, and gently held her hand.

Vivienne tried to pull her hand away, but he held it tight.

He also just sent a message to Thomas, asking him to cooperate at all costs in the full-scale attack on the Hawthorn family.

He knew that with Vivienne's power, she could easily defeat the Hawthorn family without his help, but as her fiancé, it was his job to protect her.

Even though Cordelia went to the kitchen, she was still heartbroken for Vivienne, thinking about all the things Arabella had done, but she felt helpless.

She never expected that during her noodle cooking, the Hawthorn family would be in such a mess.

Beatrice, of course, knew about Arabella accusing Vivienne of stealing credit on Twitter, she not only knew, she was very proud of it, even participating in the troublemaking.

In her eyes, Dorian was her son, Vivienne her granddaughter, no matter how she treated them, they couldn't defy her, let alone threaten to leave the Hawthorn family.

If it weren't for keeping Evelyn's perfume formula, she wouldn't be so mad.

Just as she was gloating, Michael suddenly called, "Mom, our perfume factory was reported for

dangerous goods and has been sealed by the authorities!"

"What?!" Beatrice immediately stood up, staring at Michael in shock, "How could this happen?"

After getting Dorian's perfume formula, she sold her jewelry and raised five million dollars, hoping this formula would restore the Hawthorn family's glory.

Why was the Hawthorn family's perfume factory sealed at this time?

The fate of the Hawthorn family was tied to this perfume, Beatrice forced herself to stay calm, told

Michael, "Don't panic, I'll call and ask, maybe there's some misunderstanding."

Even though she said not to panic, her hand dialing the phone was shaking.

Before she could dial the number, Joseph called again, "Mom, Field Bank, Thorne Bank, Langley

Bank... they had agreed to defer our loans, but suddenly changed their minds! Now they're forcing us

to repay the loans immediately, or they'll have the courts seize the company!"

"Why, why is this happening?" Beatrice almost fainted, the Hawthorn Group was heavily in debt, they

used to negotiate with the banks, first pay the interest, then slowly repay the loans. Why did they

suddenly change their attitude now?

Before she could figure out the reason, Michael's second call came, he angrily said, "Mom! The suppliers we negotiated with are suddenly demanding we immediately settle our debts, or they'll sue us..."

"How could this happen, we've always worked well together..." Beatrice could only say half a sentence, then felt a pain in her chest, tasted blood in her throat, and fainted.

Tranquil Estates.

Vivienne and Percival were sitting together at the dining table, eating spaghetti prepared by Cordelia.

She looked at her phone as one news alert after another popped up: "The Daily Chemical Group of the Hawthorn family Accused of Tax Evasion!"

"The Hawthorn's Group Daily Hygiene Products Cause Allergic Reactions!"

"Hawthorn Factory Exploits Workers, Causing Overworked Death!"

Within half an hour, negative news about the Hawthorn family was everywhere.

Vivienne put away her phone without expression, her face devoid of any emotion, the bankruptcy of the Hawthorn family was inevitable!

The mistakes of one person, Arabella, led to the Hawthorn family taking the fall for her.

As long as Arabella and the Hawthorn family could bear the consequences.

Percival glanced at her, raising his slender fingers to gently stroke her head, his gaze soft.

He didn't say anything, but it was as if he was telling her, not to be angry.

Cordelia was holding her phone, glancing at the news from time to time, then at Vivienne.

Even if she didn't want to look, friends who knew about her relationship with the Hawthorn family were constantly messaging her asking about the Hawthorn family's situation.

She remembered Vivienne saying earlier that she was going to bankrupt the Hawthorn family within an hour, she thought Vivienne was just talking nonsense.

How did so much happen to the Hawthorn family while she was just cooking them spaghetti?

It hasn't even been half an hour, has it?

How could Vivienne possibly have such power?

As she was watching Vivienne in disbelief, she saw Percival, sitting opposite Vivienne, looking at her with softness in his eyes.

She immediately felt like she was overthinking. It must be Percival trying to get back at someone for

Vivienne, pulling some strings with the Ellington family.

Vivienne said, "Cordelia, no sweat over Mr. Hawthorn and Thaddeus. I've got people on it, making sure they won't get a scratch."

"Alright." Cordelia, hearing this, took it as Percival had sent some people to help Vivienne protect her family.

Danger averted, Cordelia was much calmer now. She looked at Vivienne and Percival with a face full of relief and said in a heartfelt way, "Vivienne, Percival really cares about you, you better not let him down."

Vivienne thought, "What?"

How did the conversation suddenly pivot to her relationship with Percival?

"Cordelia is right." Percival's cold lips curled into a small smile, then he reached out to take Vivienne's hand, smiling meaningfully. "Vivienne, I deeply care about you, you can't let me down."

Vivienne was speechless.

Chapter 96

Vivienne's face was icy, but she still sneakily kicked Percival hard under the table.

Cordelia wasn't sure what was going on between them, but didn't Percival know himself?

She noticed that Percival seemed extra keen to hold her hand and stuck to her like glue whenever he had the chance.

Suddenly, a news alert popped up on Vivienne's phone. "Chairman of Hawthorn Group falls ill suddenly and is rushed to the hospital."

She tried to wriggle her hand out from Percival's tight grasp but failed. She shot him a cold glance, wondering if her blowing up now would scare Cordelia.

Percival, however, held onto her hand still, put down his cutlery, and showed Vivienne the news on his phone.

Vivienne glanced at the phone. The image in the news was of doctors lifting someone from the Hawthorn Mansion onto an ambulance.

Though the face was blurred out, she could tell from the clothing that it was Beatrice.

Vivienne, amused by the picture, decided to let Percival off the hook for now.

Cordelia was watching their interaction when her phone screen lit up.

"Hey, Dorian, what's up?"

Her face grew darker as she listened to Dorian on the other end of the phone.

"Vivienne." She sighed after hanging up, "Your dad called. Beatrice is seriously ill and in the hospital.

He wants us to go see her."

"Haven't we cut ties with them already?" Vivienne's tone was also icy.

"Well, yes." Cordelia sighed again. "But Beatrice is still your dad's mother. It's our duty to show filial respect. Your dad should go see her."

Vivienne silently ate her pasta. Percival, noticing her displeasure, lightly tickled her palm, but she just glared at him coldly in response.

"But don't worry." Cordelia paused. "Your dad knows his limits. Let him go by himself; we'll stay out of this for now."

As she said this, she glanced at Percival. If the Ellington family was behind what happened to the Hawthorn family, Beatrice must already know by now.

Cordelia guessed right. That was exactly what Beatrice thought.

In the VIP ward of the hospital.

Beatrice, who had just woken up, looked gloomy and sickly.

She looked at her two sons by the bedside and asked coldly, "Was it really the work of the Ellington family?"

"The situation at the bank is unclear." Michael's face was also grim. "But several suppliers indeed claimed that the Ellington family were the ones who applied the pressure."

"And Dorian? I'm on my deathbed, and he can't even bother to see me once?" Beatrice's voice was full of resentment.

Just as she finished speaking, hurried footsteps came from outside the ward. Dorian came in.

"Mom!"

As soon as Dorian called out, Beatrice frowned when she saw that he was alone. "Where's Vivienne?"

"Vivienne didn't come."

Beatrice immediately grabbed the coffee cup from the bedside table and threw it at Dorian.

BANG!

With a loud noise, the coffee cup hit the white wall of the ward. Dust fell from the wall, and the coffee cup fell to the floor. The lid bounced off and hit Dorian's shin, and the coffee inside splashed all over the

floor and onto Dorian.

Luckily, the coffee wasn't very hot; otherwise, Dorian might have been scalded.

Dorian stood awkwardly at the door. There was a hint of hurt on his face, but he still insisted on looking at Beatrice. "Mom!"

Beatrice didn't care if Dorian was hurt. She just stared at him coldly with hostile eyes. "Get Vivienne back. Do you think I've lived too long? I went all out to help her become the daughter-in-law of the Ellington family, and this is how she repays me? By letting the Ellington family ruin the Hawthorn family?"

Dorian was stunned for a moment. He thought of Arabella's Twitter and the negative news about the Hawthorn family and immediately understood what was going on.

His tone also became very heavy. "Mom, Vivienne's engagement to Percival was arranged by Evelyn.

Our family's status is not good enough for the Ellington family. And initially, you didn't want Arabella to marry Percival because of his disability. Later, you wanted to use Vivienne's marriage to make some money. So, let's not talk about doing it for Vivienne's sake anymore."

"You!" Beatrice's face showed an awkward expression. She was outraged. "Sure enough, now that you

have the support of the Ellington family, you talk differently."

"And today's incident, even if it was really done by the Ellington family. It's Percival who is helping Vivienne." Dorian continued.

"Don't tell me you don't know that Arabella slandered Vivienne. She first said that Vivienne stole her fiancé and then claimed that Vivienne took credit for curing Faye's illness."

He showed Arabella's Twitter on his phone. "But I already checked with the Baker family before I came here. It was clear that Arabella took the wrong medication and almost killed Faye. Luckily, they found Vivienne in time. If anything happened to Faye, Arabella would be in jail now!"

Knowing the truth made Dorian absolutely livid. He had never regretted adopting Arabella so much.

His adopted daughter was selfish, greedy, and had almost cost a life, yet turned around and blamed others.

"Arabella is still your daughter! She's Vivienne's sister!" Michael butted in. "Even if there are conflicts between sisters, can't they be solved privately? There's no need to bring it to the point of bankrupting the Hawthorn family."

"Yeah, Dorian, don't forget that you're part of the Hawthorn family too." Joseph chimed in.

Michael and Joseph went from dissatisfaction with Vivienne to hoping she would never come back.

Ever since she returned, the Hawthorn family had gained nothing from her but constant trouble. Now

they were going bankrupt.

Dorian felt like they were joking. He was part of the Hawthorn family? Yet he had never felt any warmth

from this family, only pressure.

"Settle it privately? If Arabella really wanted to settle it privately, why did she slander Vivienne on

Twitter and instigate netizens to attack Vivienne?"

He turned to look at Beatrice. "Today people blocked my doorstep, and others went to Thaddeus'

kindergarten to stir up trouble. Our entire corridor was splashed with red paint and filled with curses

against Vivienne."

He sneered and suddenly felt an overwhelming fatigue. "Netizens are not stupid. Posting attacking

comments on the internet and sending intimidating parcels is one thing, but how many people would be

so foolish as to rally for an irrelevant Arabella and publicly cause such big trouble? What's the deal with

these people? Are they really netizens?"

"What... what do you mean?" Beatrice's eyes flickered as she avoided Dorian's sharp gaze.

Chapter 97

At first, Dorian was unsure about his inner doubts, but after seeing Beatrice's response, his icy heart was now covered in even more frost.

"Mom, since you know what's really going on, why pretend to be clueless? Does Arabella really have the cash to hire all these people to cause trouble? Can you really assure me you had nothing to do with all this?"

"I couldn't care less!" Beatrice brusquely interrupted Dorian. "The bottom line is that this mess was cooked up by Vivienne and the Ellington family. Vivienne has to clean it up. She's a Hawthorn too!"

"Oh, Mom, remember how you stopped me from acknowledging Vivienne? Now suddenly she's a Hawthorn again?" Disappointment filled Dorian's eyes as he looked at Beatrice. "I won't interfere with Vivienne's decisions."

Dorian felt nothing but pain after recalling how Evelyn and Vivienne had been humiliated and driven out of the Hawthorn family. He coldly spoke to Beatrice. "Mom, we've cut ties, okay? I came to see you today because we're still family. You're my mother, even if it's just in name. And frankly, I'm not enjoying

this visit, so I'm out of here."

With that, he turned around and left without hesitation.

"That ungrateful brat!" Beatrice was so mad that she pounded the bed. "I should've strangled him when he was born!"

"Mom, did you really send people to make trouble at Dorian's place?" Michael Hawthorn asked.

In the past, no matter how Beatrice bullied Dorian, he would never intervene. He even enjoyed it. But with the Hawthorn family in such a bad state, his voice was now tinged with resentment.

Beatrice kept quiet.

"What do we do now?" Joseph Hawthorn asked urgently. "Vivienne won't see Mom; the Ellingtons show us no respect, and let's not even think about begging Percival. We went through so much trouble to get that formula from Dorian. We were almost back on top, and now this happens!"

Just as Beatrice was about to speak, footsteps were heard outside the room. She immediately sneered. "Finally decided to come back..."

The door opened, and she was stunned. In came a beautiful middle-aged woman in a white suit.

Beatrice was thrilled. "Iris! You're back!"

"Mom." Iris Hawthorn walked in with a bag of fruit and glanced at the spilled coffee and coffee cup on the floor. "What happened? I just got back and heard that something happened at home. How come you're in the hospital?"

Iris was Beatrice's only daughter. She rarely returned home since moving to Ozoria with her husband ten years ago.

Beatrice had always doted on her only daughter. Seeing Iris made tears fill her eyes.

"It's all because of Vivienne and Dorian!"

"Is Vivienne really back?"

Iris was slightly surprised. When she'd heard Evelyn and Vivienne had been thrown out of the Hawthorn family, she always felt pained whenever she thought about it. She had come back this time because she'd heard about this and wanted to see her niece, Vivienne, whom she'd always been concerned about.

"Dorian should've never brought that troublemaker back!" Beatrice said bitterly.

Iris frowned slightly and asked for a detailed account of what happened.

Although Beatrice and the two brothers exaggerated and were biased, Iris managed to discern the truth.

Her originally gentle voice became somewhat heavy. "Clearly, Arabella was in the wrong. She should clarify and apologize. Where is she? You spoil her too much. You're sick, so why isn't she here taking care of you?"

...

At Cloudcrest High School, after Vivienne and Percival had lunch, they went to the school.

As soon as they arrived, Vivienne was surrounded by some of Arabella's supporters.

"Vivienne, have you no shame? Not only did you steal Arabella's man, you're also trying to take credit for her healing Ms. Faye!"

"Exactly. You're a teacher, but you're taking credit from your own sister. Have you no morals?"

"Right..."

However, the students of Class Eighteen firmly stood by Vivienne.

Logan had long regarded Vivienne as his idol. He couldn't stand anyone badmouthing Vivienne. He

immediately and angrily stood up for her. "Nonsense! Are you guys brainless? Is whatever Arabella says the gospel truth?"

Charlotte Redwood also snorted. "Exactly, it's all Arabella's one-sided story! The Baker family has issued a statement saying Arabella didn't heal Ms. Faye at all. In fact, she almost killed her. If it wasn't for Ms. Vivienne, she'd be a murderer right now!"

The Baker family did indeed issue a statement right away to help Vivienne clarify the truth.

But people online, influenced by Arabella's earlier tweets, didn't believe the Baker family's statement, thinking it was just them trying to appease Vivienne.

And this group of high school students who were accusing Vivienne seemed to share the same view.

Sure enough, someone immediately chimed in. "Pfft, the Baker family is biased too, right? They're obviously siding with Vivienne because she's the daughter of the Hawthorn family and has ties to the Ellington family. They're just twisting the truth and helping Vivienne to suppress Arabella, all to curry favor with the Ellingtons."

"Yeah, Arabella is Dr. William's top student. Even if she can't cure people, she wouldn't nearly kill them, right? The Baker family's statement is clearly flawed."

"I think that the claim that Vivienne cured the young miss of the Ellington family is probably a lie too. It's just Percival trying to hype up his fiancée and promote her."

Then Arabella walked over. She glanced at Vivienne and Percival, suppressed the malice in her eyes, and then put on a pitiful face, saying to Vivienne, "Sis, I've always been yielding to you, but this time, I don't want to yield anymore. You owe me an explanation."

Vivienne smiled at her. "Are you still living in a dream?"

The Hawthorn family was almost bankrupt, and this lady was still demanding explanations from her?

Where was her brain?

Arabella was taken aback. "What do you mean?"

At that moment, a classmate next to her tugged at Arabella and handed her a phone. "Arabella, something's happened to the Hawthorn family."

Arabella took the phone, looking puzzled. When she saw the news about the family crisis and the old lady being hospitalized, her eyes widened in shock. She looked at Vivienne in disbelief and then shouted, "Sis! You clearly did something wrong! I could have forgiven you if you had apologized, but

you showed no remorse, and even..."

Arabella turned to look at Percival. "...Even used the power of the Ellington family to suppress us.

You're just a puppet to the Ellingtons. Do you really think you can control everything by yourself? How

long can you rely on the Ellingtons?"

"Hmph." Vivienne snorted lightly. Why did everyone think she was depending on the Ellington family?

She slightly raised the corner of her mouth, revealing a mocking smile. "What's wrong with me relying

on the Ellingtons? If they can back me up, I can do whatever I want. You want to rely on them too, but

you can't. Are you angry?"

"Really angry!" Charlotte smacked her thigh loudly as she chimed in.

Chapter 98

Percival had been silently grinning like a Cheshire cat on the side. He knew Vivienne was provoking

Arabella for fun, but he was secretly enjoying it. Why? It felt like Vivienne was treating him as her rock,

and that gave him a reason to keep going.

"You!" Arabella snapped. "You're shameless!"

"Humph!" Vivienne scoffed as she strutted up close and personal to Arabella. Her smirk instantly faded.

"You know why I haven't done anything to you?"

Arabella glared at her, refusing to respond.

"I warned you to keep your hands off Dorian and Cordelia. If you dare, you'll face the consequences, and you'll be the one apologizing to me." Vivienne smirked again. "Do you think Beatrice would abandon the Hawthorn family for you?"

Arabella trembled. She was unable to answer. She knew Beatrice wouldn't bail on the Hawthorn family for her.

Vivienne shot her a dismissive look and then glanced at the others who had been insulting her. She pulled out her phone and dialed a number.

"Lysander, there are students openly insulting a teacher. We're at the school entrance. Could you please handle this?"

Upon hearing this, the students turned pale.

"How shameless! Why involve the principal in kids' stuff?"

Vivienne chuckled as she squinted her eyes with mirth. She patted the complaining student's shoulder.

"Kid, you're a child; I'm a teacher. You might not know me, but Class Eighteen does. I'm a big fan of

tattling."

Class Eighteen students nodded in agreement.

The other students fell silent.

Soon, Lysander arrived with the Dean of Students.

Lysander scanned the students, coldly saying, "Mr. Samuel, take down their names, announce it to the whole school, and put it on record. Any student found insulting teachers again will be dealt with strictly."

With that, Lysander left with a stern face.

The students were left dumbfounded, unable to recover from the shock.

Noticing that no one was defending her, Arabella turned to Coral.

Usually, Coral would be the first one to stand up for Arabella, but this time she just stood there quietly.

Coral glanced at Arabella as she contemplated the situation.

After a severe scolding from her parents last night, she barely slept. What her mom said constantly played in her mind.

This morning, her mom looked at her tired face and decided to teach her how some people acted in the

real world. "You want to know if Arabella is truly your friend or if she is just using you, right? Simply tell her that our family is in a tough spot and ask her if she's willing to plead with Vivienne for us because it was her misleading you that made you target Vivienne."

Coral hesitated for a while and finally told Arabella about it at lunch.

Arabella just brushed it off, which made Coral's heart sink. Maybe Arabella wasn't really her friend but was indeed just using her.

After getting no reaction from Coral, Arabella became anxious but didn't dare ask Coral for help directly.

Just then, a deep voice came from the crowd. "Coral, what are you doing here?"

Coral was startled and saw Brandon Lockwood and Mrs. Lockwood standing outside the crowd, looking displeased.

She panicked and took a step back, distancing herself from Arabella.

The Lockwoods had also arrived with Jaylan Lockwood and Gabriel Lockwood.

After seeing Vivienne and Percival together, Brandon and Mrs. Lockwood quickly greeted them. "Ms.

Vivienne, Mr. Ellington."

Vivienne raised an eyebrow but didn't respond.

Percival stayed silent and watched the Lockwoods with a cold gaze.

The Lockwoods, who had originally come to apologize to Vivienne, immediately pulled Coral from the crowd and pushed her in front of Vivienne. "Ms. Vivienne, our daughter's behavior was due to our lack of discipline. We're making her apologize to you now and promise to never offend you again."

The students started whispering among themselves.

The Lockwoods had planned to bring Coral to Tranquil Estates to apologize to Vivienne, but she wasn't home. After hearing the news that the Hawthorn Group's properties had been suppressed, they rushed to the school, fearing that Coral would stick up for Arabella again.

They didn't expect to find Coral there.

Brandon looked grim. His daughter was disobedient. She ignored both his gentle advice and his stern warnings.

He didn't understand why Arabella, a cunning girl, was worth being friends with.

Vivienne stood there quietly without responding and just looked at the Lockwoods.

If they wanted to apologize, they should do it properly. She didn't need to give them a chance to speak.

Percival stood right by Vivienne's side. It looked like he was backing her up or something. When he looked at the Lockwoods, all his softness disappeared. It was replaced by a kind of authority that only those who held high positions could have.

Brandon sneakily glanced at Percival. He had seen his fair share of big shots, but few had the same kind of authority as Percival.

He turned his head and coldly said to Coral, "You better apologize to Ms. Vivienne right now."

"Ms. Vivienne, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have accused you of stealing my mom's bracelet and tricking my brother into taking you to the police station. I shouldn't have questioned your education and got my uncle to give you trouble at school. I promise not to do it again."

Coral bit her lip as a look of reluctance appeared on her face. She didn't want to back down, but with her parents around, she didn't really have a choice.

She might be a bit stuck-up, but she knew that if she didn't behave, her parents would kick her out.

And she knew they'd totally do it.

"Ms. Vivienne, I totally dropped the ball last time. I didn't see things clearly." Gabriel was way more straightforward than Coral. With an embarrassed look on his face, he profusely apologized. "I messed

up big time. I was clueless. I beg for your forgiveness. Please help me return to..."

Before he could finish, Mrs. Lockwood gave him a swift kick, warning him to shut up and stopping him from saying another word about getting his old job back.

Brandon and Mrs. Lockwood were no dummies. They knew apologies weren't just talk. If you screwed up, you had to take your lumps.

So, they were here to apologize, for real. They weren't looking for sympathy or for Vivienne and Percival to help them recover their losses.

Honestly, it would be great if they could just get the Ellington family off the Lockwood family's back and keep what they had left. Any other expectations would be too much.

"Ms. Vivienne, I screwed up last time when I arrested you. I took you to the station without a proper investigation. I formally apologize to you." Jaylan stepped forward and joined the apology crew.

Chapter 99

Coral and Gabriel's apologies didn't seem to move Vivienne at all. Her face remained expressionless.

But when it came to Jaylan, she finally spoke up. "Regarding the incident last time, you called me in for an investigation following all legal procedures, without any evidence or arrest warrant. That's by the

book, and you're a straight shooter. Therefore, after your suspension, I didn't do anything inappropriate to the Lockwood family."

Jaylan twitched his lips. She might not have done anything, but her fiancé sure did.

The Lockwood family's business had taken a major hit last time, but that was just a lesson from

Percival. This time, Percival wasn't leaving them any room for survival. He was clearly aiming for the Lockwoods to go bankrupt.

But Jaylan didn't voice out these thoughts. They were here to apologize, not to accuse them.

Vivienne subtly raised her eyes as her delicate fingers tucked a stray hair behind her ear. Slowly, she asked, "Jaylan, do you remember how you got to where you are now?"

Jaylan stiffened. He stared at Vivienne in shock, unable to find the words to respond.

Of course, he remembered.

The Lockwood family's current status wasn't entirely due to their parents' efforts, and his own promotions weren't entirely due to his own merit. The Lockwoods had been given a leg up.

They didn't know who their benefactor was. After helping the Lockwoods reach their current status, the benefactor only advised them not to misuse their power to oppress ordinary people. They were taught

to do good deeds and to make good karma. If the Lockwoods did wrong, everything they now had would be taken back.

Jaylan, Brandon, and Mrs. Lockwood were all shocked by Vivienne's words.

After a long silence, Brandon managed to find the strength to say a few words as his whole body shook. "Ms. Vivienne, are you..."

Vivienne didn't answer him, but instead pulled out a ring from her pocket and put it on.

Upon seeing the ring, Brandon nearly collapsed to his knees. Vivienne gave him a glance, and he managed to steady himself.

"Nine... "

He didn't get to finish his sentence when he suddenly realized something and quickly closed his mouth.

Vivienne cast him a cold look and said impassively, "I hope this is the last time."

"Yes, yes, we understand. There won't be a next time." Brandon's throat was so dry that he didn't know how he was still talking.

"Take your daughter and leave." Vivienne said indifferently.

Brandon didn't dare linger and quickly left with Coral.

After they left, Percival stared at Vivienne for a long time, and then his gaze fell on the hand from which she'd just removed the ring.

He had seen that ring once before, but the one he'd seen was slightly different from the one on Vivienne's hand. Without a closer look, the difference was not noticeable.

He didn't know why Vivienne had that ring, but he knew that it represented a kind of power, a power greater than the one he'd been nurturing covertly.

Who exactly was Vivienne?

Vivienne was oblivious to his thoughts. She glanced at the students who were panicking because of the principal's punishment, and her gaze eventually landed on Arabella. Without saying a word, she turned and left.

After Vivienne left, the students who wanted to defend Arabella looked at each other.

The scene just now reminded them of their previous suspicions about Vivienne's fake academic qualifications and how they were refuted.

And the cause of all that was Arabella.

For a moment, everyone started to doubt Arabella.

After seeing their expressions, Arabella knew what was about to happen.

Luckily, her phone rang at that moment. It was Beatrice.

She quickly answered the call. "Grandma, I just saw the news. How are you? I'll come to see you right now."

After hanging up and asking for leave from her teacher, she rushed to the hospital.

At the hospital.

Arabella hurried to Beatrice's ward and was surprised to see her seldom-returning aunt, Iris, there.

She paused for a moment and then smiled. "Aunt Iris, you're back?"

Iris gave her a glance and simply said, "Yes."

Arabella was slightly taken aback. She was feeling annoyed. Iris was always cold to her. She treated her as if she owed her a lot of money.

She decided to ignore Iris and turned to Beatrice, only to find that Beatrice and Michael were both looking at her.

Beatrice looked kind, but there was a shadow in her eyes. She beckoned Arabella. "Arabella, come here. Grandma has something to tell you.

I want you to come clean and tell the truth about the incident of Vivienne stealing your credit on Twitter."

Arabella's heart sank. "I understand, Grandma."

Cloudcrest High School.

Arabella's apology and clarification on Twitter had just been posted when Vivienne saw it.

Arabella recorded a video admitting that it was Vivienne who cured Faye Churchill and that she didn't steal her credit.

She confessed that she slandered Vivienne out of jealousy and sincerely apologized to Vivienne, asking for her forgiveness.

But the netizens' attitude didn't change.

Even though Arabella clarified the situation, she was crying in the video, looking very pitiful as if she herself was the wronged one.

The comments under the video all expressed disbelief. They thought Arabella must have been

pressured to post such a video.

For a while, the internet was going off on Vivienne.

Vivienne gave a cold laugh. Arabella's reluctance to post that video had silently shifted public opinion against her.

She was still playing mind games with her at this point?

Interesting!

At that moment, Vivienne's phone rang. It was from an unknown number. She frowned slightly and picked it up.

"Vivienne." A gentle voice came from the phone. "It's Iris. Do you remember me?"

"Iris." Vivienne paused and suddenly felt a softness in her heart. A gentle face appeared in her mind.

How could Vivienne forget her? During her childhood in the Hawthorn family, apart from Dorian, only

Aunt Iris was kind and gentle to her. She played with her, bought her delicious food, and told her stories.

In the Hawthorn Mansion, Iris occupied half of Vivienne's few happy memories.

Vivienne had only heard that Iris had moved to Ozoria with her husband. She didn't expect her to come back so suddenly.

"It's me. Do you remember me?" Iris's voice became even softer. "I've been missing you all these years. I'm so glad Dorian found you, Vivienne... Can I see you?"

Vivienne was silent for a while. "Sure."

Vivienne thought her heart had become as hard as iron over the past ten years, but she was still moved by people like Cordelia and Iris who truly cared for her.

"I also want to see Thaddeus." Iris's voice was full of anticipation. "Shall we take him to the amusement park after school?"

"Sure." Vivienne agreed.

Chapter 100

After school, Percival wanted to walk home together, but Vivienne shut him down hard.

She always had a lot of stuff on her mind about her mom that she wanted to talk about with Iris, and having Percival there would make it awkward.

Vivienne and Iris had already informed Dorian and Cordelia, so they picked up Thaddeus, grabbed a bite, and headed to the amusement park.

It'd been a long time, and Iris's face seemed a lot older than Vivienne remembered, but she was still as gentle as ever.

Iris held Thaddeus and smiled at Vivienne. It reminded her of an old photo where Iris was holding her with the same gentleness.

That was her only time at an amusement park.

Vivienne was prepared for Iris to plead for the Hawthorn family.

But Iris dragged Thaddeus straight to the merry-go-round as soon as they got there and waved at

Vivienne. "Come on, Vivienne, join us."

Vivienne cracked a smile. Her beauty was like a breath of springtime sunshine.

Aside from a few rides with height restrictions, the three of them did the whole park.

In the end, Iris and Thaddeus came out of the haunted house and got all excited after seeing the Ferris wheel.

While queuing, Thaddeus wanted some ice cream. Iris turned to Vivienne. "Hold the line, Vivienne. I'll take him to get some. We'll be right back."

"Sure." Vivienne nodded.

However, they were taking forever. It was almost their turn, and there was still no sign of them.

Just as Vivienne was hesitating at the ticket gate, someone grabbed her hand from the side and dragged her onto the Ferris wheel.

She whipped around to see who it was and frowned. "Mr. Ellington, don't you have anything better to do?"

The Ferris wheel started its slow ascent as the door closed.

Percival was a big guy. The cabin was not small, but it still felt a bit cramped to him.

He sat back in the seat. "Isolde wanted to come to the park. What are the odds that you guys are here too."

With that, he pointed out the window.

Vivienne looked out to see Thomas with Isolde in the queue. The little girl had sharp eyes; she spotted

Vivienne and began waving frantically.

After the engagement party, Percival's parents took Isolde back. Percival's mom, Cecilia, didn't like

Vivienne, so she kept Isolde away from the Hawthorn family, which was driving her nuts.

Percival opened his hands at Vivienne, indicating that he wasn't pulling her leg.

Vivienne sat across from Percival with a smirk on her face. As if to say, "Yeah, like I'm gonna believe you."

She had declined Percival's company today because she had questions for Iris about her mother, Evelyn.

But Percival still followed, which irked her.

So far, Percival had been the perfect fiancé. He always behaved appropriately and did a lot for her.

Most girls would have fallen madly in love with him by now. They would have even been ready to give their hearts to him.

But she was Vivienne.

She had been walking on eggshells for ten years, since she lost her mother.

Human nature was hard to gauge, which was a fact she was certain of.

Even though she knew Percival, she didn't fully trust him, especially when she found out that he had been to her and her mother's house after her mother's death, looking for something.

So, she would scrutinize his every move to see if he had ulterior motives.

She tolerated him always being around her, not because she was moved by him, but to see his true colors.

She was used to hiding herself. She had the patience.

In silence, the Ferris wheel slowly turned as their cabin stopped at the highest point.

Vivienne looked out the window. The night sky seemed close but far away still.

She looked down upon the amusement park lights and the tiny crowds.

Iris and Thaddeus returned with ice cream. They were in line with Thomas and Isolde; both kids were hand in hand, laughing and chatting.

Not far off, fireworks lit up the entire sky. It was a riot of dazzling colors.

She was watching the fireworks, and Percival was watching her.

She didn't know that her profile, in the changing light of the fireworks, was breathtaking.

"I want to buy this amusement park for you." After saying this, Percival found that his throat was now a bit dry. He had to fake a cough and turned his head.

But, in the moment he turned his head, the cabin's glass reflected the amazement in his eyes. It was so

intense that even he was surprised.

Vivienne was oblivious, and she gave him a slight smile. "You want to buy this amusement park for me?"

"You seem to really like it here." Percival was blunt.

"Mr. Ellington, how about we make a bet?" Vivienne's smile deepened.

"Bet on what?"

"If you can buy this amusement park for me, I'll do something for you." Vivienne leaned in slightly, with a hint of mischief in her smile. "If you can't, you do something for me."

"Anything?"

"Yep."

Percival looked up to see Vivienne leaning in.

The fireworks in the night sky danced in her eyes, reflecting his own face.

She was smiling. "My promises come with a high price tag."

In that moment, he felt his heart skip a bit, and his mind went blank. He didn't know why he agreed.

"Alright."

Vivienne looked surprised. She straightened up and began scrutinizing Percival. She didn't think he was a fool, so she couldn't figure out why he would accept such a bet.

This amusement park was hers. She had come here once when she was nineteen, and then she bought it as a keepsake of the past.

He wanted to buy her own property and give it back to her? If she wasn't willing to sell, then Percival couldn't pull it off.

So, he was bound to lose.

"I let you win." Percival said as he chuckled at Vivienne's puzzled look. He looked at her with adoration.

"So even you can play coy, huh?"

"What?" Vivienne blinked in surprise.

"Never mind."

The great Ferris wheel had unknowingly completed a full rotation. Percival stood up and, like a gentleman, opened the cabin door for Vivienne.

Vivienne shot him a puzzled look and then stepped out.

They waited outside for a bit before Iris and the others finally got off the Ferris wheel.

"Vivienne!" As soon as Isolde got off the Ferris wheel, she dashed over, aiming to bolt towards

Vivienne.