

Rewriting Life Chapter 191 – 200

Chapter 191

“**Ahem**, ahem.” Eliana drobed on her roffer. “Cameron, when did you get here?”

Cameron **glanced** at the piece of paper in front of her. It **was** a list of IP addresses **that Eliana** had copied down earlier. Eliana **quickly** put the pap

“I stopped by the library to borrow a dictionary **and** saw you here, so I thought I’d come say hello. I haven’t been here long.”

“Oh okay”

“I just saw you writing down some addresses. Are you going there!”

Ehana stayed quiet Cameron saw her note anyway. Tucking her hair behind her ear, she dismissed it. “Just some random addresses, nothing important.”

Was Cameron’s eyesight good enough to see what she wrote on the note!

Eliana wanted to handle the black market situation alone, keeping it a secret. She knew if Cameron found out, things would become much more

troublesome.

She would feel anxious if her secret was found out. If too many people knew a secret, it was not a secret anymore.

*Ill be going then. Stella is waiting for me.”

“Okay” Cameron responded softly

Eliana packed her laptop into her bag, got **up**, and left. After leaving the library, she went straight to the cafeteria, **had dinner** with Stella, and then left Isonread University after school.

Back home, Eliana led, saying that she **was** out for some fun **with** Thomas. Eliana often went out at night, so Lucy and Sebastian didn’t suspect. They just told her to be back by 10 p.m

She took a taxi to Neon Night, but the bar was tucked away **in a maze of alley’s**, inaccessible by car. She had to get out and walk the rest of the way

Eliana's footsteps echoed in the darkness of the old, unlit alley. As she neared the end, a signboard came into view Neon Night." "Found it."

The bar's entrance resembled a vintage nightclub. It looked old and had a cheap aromatic herapy smell. Eliana pushed the door open. The interior design evoked a bygone era, reminiscent of a **last-** century nightclubs, and even the music had a dated, almost faded quality

She glanced around. There were no customers, but behind the bar **was** a middle-aged man with long **hair**, a cigarette in his mouth, wiping a glass. "Sorry, we're closed."

"But it's only eight o'clock To be fair, how could a bar close at eight Eliana approached, but the man's gaze remained fixed on his glass, the cigarette dangling from his lips and bobbing with each word, ash dropping silently.

"We don't serve guests"

"Why? Can't you understand me?" The **man, visibly** irritated, glared at Eliana

Eliana sat on the high stool in front of the bar, her chin resting on one hand. She smiled, saying word by word, I understand others. **Laust** can't understand you".

The man was speechless. She meant that he was strange so she couldn't understand **him**: Such provocative words made the man put his glass heavily on the table.

Eliana said. "Hey, hey, hey, be careful, it would be a pity if such a good hexagram crystal **cup** breaks." As she spoke, Eliana looked around, found the stairs leading to the second floor on the right, and asked, "Are they upstairs"

The man stopped abruptly, his disdain for Eliana replaced by scrutiny. His hand discreetly moved **towards** the alarm button under the table, ready to alert those upstairs if trouble arose. "**Who are** you?"

"No need to be so nervous."

Five individuals controlled the vast information network of the black market. They were scattered across the **globe**, only coming together once every two years.

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The information they hold maintained a delicate balance with various forces around **the** world. They remained separated to avoid being captured all at once. Their keys granted access to the information database server.

Every two years, the three keys were rotated among the five key keepers, with each **taking** turns safeguarding them. Today, they would meet for the key exchange. This location was shrouded in secrecy, never to be disclosed.

The **man** thought, "What this woman? Who is she? She **doesn't** look **like** an ordinary customer here for a drink!

She tapped her fingers on the table and said with interest. "Why don't you **guess** who I am?"

The man was alerted. He had killing intent in his eyes when he looked at Eliana. "I don't like to guess. Whoever you are, you will soon be dead..."

The moment he stopped talking, the man drew a silenced pistol from his waistband and aimed it at Eliana. At such close range, he could easily hit

However, Eliana was one step ahead of **him**. The man froze. Before he could pull the trigger, he felt a chill on **his neck**. He looked down and saw a small blade from a utility knife stuck in his neck. Excruciating pain suddenly swept through his body

Eliana **easily** took the gun, twirled it in her hand, and warned. "Don't move or try to grab it. You'll get hurt. You don't want to make a mess, do you?"

Eliana had **carefully** maneuvered the extremely sharp utility knife, avoiding any areas **that** would prove fatal. However, if he removed it, the situation could turn **deadly**. Tucking the gun behind her back, she glanced at her watch; time was running out.

"I'm going upstairs first. I advise you not to pull it out. You will die if you do." With that, she strode towards the stairs, taking two steps at a time, and went up to the second floor.

There was only one room on the second floor. She politely knocked on the door first and introduced herself at the door, "Hello everyone, I'm coming in first"

No answer **was** heard. With a "click", the door opened and Eliana walked in calmly.

Five men were sitting in the room, but there were six glasses on the table. Eliana glanced around and smiled. The five middle-aged men were all panicked when they saw Eliana.

Since only one person was from Fuvrean, Eliana could speak freely, knowing they would all understand. "Gentlemen, let's not waste time. I'm six Noir. You've **been** searching for me, **haven't** you?"

Nobody replied to her. "What? They looked at each other, not understanding what was going on. How on earth did this woman get upstairs?"

Only the man who was from Monoesil understood Eliana's words. He was shocked. "What do you want?"

"Peaceful coexistence. I want you to cancel the wanted order on the black market."

"Impossible! You dare to hack into our system, we will never tolerate you."

Eliana smiled slightly. That's **easy**. When I came, I sent the coordinates here to the International Criminal Police. In five minutes, this place will be locked by satellite. Since you don't choose peace, let the black market disappear."

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The blond

the table and

nical disrupted their plans for an important chent meeting to

The press the alarm!

to press the bamon

Elana glanced at her watch again and sad coldly. "You have four minutes let

prepared for everything.

if they seed for time. Ehiana wouldnt he may
danger because she had the entire Days family backing them ope but the low p

lucky. If they were caught they would be in trouble

What China did startled them. They didn't expect six Nour to be able to use hadden wea
po

other th

than backing

he killed them here directly and then went back to take credit. She could do that. No dou
bt

cons, under Eliana's coercion, the tive people finally handed over one

After weighing the

three keys to her. Then

When they went downstairs, they saw that the man who had been wiping the glass behind the bar had paved—out group of people rushed in from outside, came the man out and escorted the five of them out together.

Before leaving they turned their heads and glanced at Ehana. “We will remem

Eliana stood in the bar with her mobile phone in her hand, her face expressless, and operated her phone is a lie mck. No big deal. In fact, she didn’t send the location to the Interpol Inspection Department at all. She just thated hers, and it

This only meant that they were guilty themselves.

She had a key, so they wouldn’t dare to act nahly, and the wanted order on the black market would be invalid in the future. The hidden danger completely eliminated.

Hiaria, in a very good mood, strode **out** of the bar. She didn’t notice the man in the white coat who walked out of the room of behind her.

Eliana went back home.

She held the key to the black market server in her hand and looked at it. room, she clearly saw six cups on the coffee table

ed at it. She suddenly thought of the sixth cup on the table. After she entered the

But there were only five people in the room. Why was there an extra cup Could it be that they had other guests who hadn’t arrived”

Or maybe the guest had already arrived and was hiding, so she missed one... As Ellana was thinking the key in her hand suddenly fell to the carpet Lunchie, who was lying under the bed, suddenly came forward, grabbed the key, and swallowed it

Elana quickly dug into its mouth. “Oh my god! You are it! You silly wolf, why did you rat in This is not food. Spit it out. Quirky Spit it out

This was the key to the server that controlled all the information on the black **market!** There were only three in the whole world.

When the key

was pawned to her, Eliana thought that as long as the wanted order was revoked, she w

ould find a way to return it because she indivi want to attract more trouble. The key coul
d bring hidden **danger**. But expectedly, Lunchie ane it.

“**It’s** over. I **have** to give you a laxative. We have to get it out.” Lunchie looked at Eliana
innocently, **his** eyelids drooping.

Eliana left the room and asked the servant to feed Lunchie a laxative, but Lunchie was v
ery clever, and he wasn’t hungry now, so he refused to eat This made things difficult for
the servant. She had to keep an eye on Lunchie until it pooped

Eliana had to go to school tomorrow, so she went to bed first t and told the servant to fin
d the key. The servant did not dare to neglect Eliana wonder nodding and promising to fi
nd the key in Lunchie’s feces.

After the five successfully left Manoeuil, it dawned on them that they had been **uncked!**

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International

police chusing them? Just nonsense. They had been dering like rats across the street, o
nly to realize it when they got on the pl “Damn it, we’ve been had?” They discussed Sex
Noir on the plane.

“She is running” Th think Six Noir was a **woman** all along”

“Yes, I never would have guessed”

She has the **key** now How are we going to find her??

“First, we **need** to cancel the warrant **and call** back everyone who went looking for her!”

.

“We must get the key back.. Such a cunning woman, From Monsesi...”

The next **day**, the wanted order on the black market was rescinded.

Now that Ehana had nothing to worry about, she was much more relaxed when she was
training af the tennis court. However, Eliana felt that something was strange.

men Cameron at the tennis court, the way he looked at her was

was strange, as if he had seen everything through, **making** Eliana feel

When she met

terrified.

Eliana asked. "Cameron, why are you looking at me like **that??**"

Cameron paused for a moment **and** replied, "Nothing"

Thomas quipped. "Tin't Cameron always like **this?**"

Elana answered, "Not at all"

"What's the difference?"

Eluuna didn't **answer**. She couldn't **say**, but she just felt that he was different

Well, well, maybe it **was** her imagination. Eliana didn't take it to heart.

In the afternoon, during class, Stella and Eliana walked into the classroom with their computers and books and bumped into Wendy leaving the classroom.

Wendy happened to be holding a bottle of water, which tilted and spilled, wetting the clothes in Willow's gift bag, "Aht My clothes..."

Willow quickly took the wet gift bag, took out the nearly folded clothes inside, and checked them, but they were

WEL

Charlene said. "Oh my **god**. Willow, you haven't worn these clothes yet. What should we do now?"

who was

It would have been fine if the water in the bottle was just pure water. Wendy had a milkshake in the bottle today. So what spilled out was a

milkshake

"What should I do?" Willow asked, her voice trembling. "I bought this outfit for the president's birthday party, and now it's ruined... I haven't even worn it once. I went through so much trouble finding this new suit." Her eyes welled up with tears, and she looked utterly pitiful:

Wendy glanced at the clothes, then turned and glared at Eliana, saying, "Are you two blind? Look at the way, okay? Look what you've done! Pay for

the clothes"

Sheryl

chimed in, “Pay for the clothes? Still **useless**. They’re hard to get. Willow made a great effort. I heard that this set is a limited edition. There are only five sets in Dratora City. They were sold out. The birthday party is tomorrow. It’s **too** late **anyway**.”

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Eliana glanced at the outfit Willow was holding

There was a noticeable **milkshake** stain near the shoulder, **standing** out starkly against the beige fabric. Light-colored clothing always made stains more obvious

This outfit looked strangely familiar

It was the latest Chanel tweed skirt set, probably one of the pieces Lucy had passed on.

Every year, Lucy spent a considerable sum on clothes and accessories. As an elite member, she was invited to luxury brand annual events. Each season, new collections were sent to her home first so she could have the pick of the lot. Whatever she left behind would then be sent to the boutiques.

For the wealthy, luxury brands were practically a personal wardrobe. Some rich **ladies** like Lucy could even pre-order the limited-edition pieces ahead of everyone

to compensate you, Eliana said softly.

Sheryl scoffed. “Didn’t I just make it clear enough? This is a limited edition, only five of these in the world. They’ve been sold out for ages. How exactly are you planning to compensate Willow!”

Charlene chimed in. “Exactly. Just pay her instead! But you’ll need to pay based on the current market price. This outfit’s resale value skyrocketed. It’s now five times the original price.

Stella rolled her eyes. “Why should Eliana **pay** the market price? Even if compensation is necessary, it should be for the amount Willow originally paid. “Designer clothing prices fluctuate like crazy. There’s always some seasonal hype. By your logic, if the **price** goes up, Eliana has to pay more. and if it drops, does that mean Willow has to refund the difference?”

Charlene’s **eyes** widened as she retorted, her **tone** haughty. “Stella, you are such an...”

Before the argument could escalate, Willow interrupted them. I don’t want money. I just want another dress. Without it, how am I supposed to attend Natalia’s birthday party to

morrow! “Eliana, I know you’re upset about not being able to go. Don’t tell me you did this on purpose to stop

At her words, the atmosphere shifted.

What had seemed like an accidental spill suddenly felt calculated. Willow’s insinuation was clear. Flisna had deliberately ruined her dress.

‘Could it be that Eliana was jealous over not being invited to Natalia’s party, intentionally dirtied Willow’s dress? Out everyone began to wonder

Charlene exchanged a glance with Sharryl, and realization dawned on both of them. “Ah, I see now...” Charlene muttered.

The other classmates quickly **latched** onto Willow’s narrative.

“Eliana wasn’t invited. And now **Willow’s dress** is ruined. Could it really be that Eliana was jealous **and** did this on purpose? That’s so malicious!” one of them remarked.

Charlene gasped dramatically. “Oh my **God**. Eliana, you’re so scheming! You can’t go, so you’re trying to stop Willow from going? That’s shameless! I’ve never **met anyone** as calculating as you. Don’t you feel **ashamed**?”

Shaeryl nodded in agreement. “Right. Everyone at school knows Natalia’s birthday party is the social event of the year for **sonra** University. Only the most **notable** students are invited. Eliana **parades** around calling herself the university’s campus queen, but she didn’t even get an invite. She must be seething with jealousy, constantly plotting behind the scenes. Well, today, **she finally** saw her chance, didn’t she?”

Willow had expected Eliana to **panic and** start frantically defending herself, but to her **mild** disappointment. Eliana remained **calm and** expressionless, showing no intention of explaining herself. A flicker of dissatisfaction crossed Willow’s mind.

The truth was, Willow **just wanted** to see a look of envy or awe in Eliana’s eyes, something akin to what Willow had once felt toward Elana during timetravel.

After all, being able to attend Natalia’s birthday party **was** a dream for the average student at **Instead University**. It was the kind of event that inspired both admiration and jealousy. Everyone envied those lucky enough to be invited.

Eliana had no interest in wasting her time arguing **with** them.

It’s clear to me that you’re all deeply insecure. Honestly, I’m curious. How insecure do you have to be to project such **darkness** onto others? Willow, you’re pathetic,” Eliana said calmly,

Willow froze in **place** as if **struck** by lightning.

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Thana walked **past** her, tossing **a** parting remark over her shoulder. "Nance Evandbad replace the mihi, Twill. Dont worry I wouldn't let yenu sliow inje to Natabas berthilay party **naked**"

led. **Ehana** made a quick call home. She asked a servant to bring

ng her new camellia gown from lo

her wandede to the sched

Before class started. |

The camella series was another lassited edition parve from Chanel's collection this seas on, though it wasn't as widely known as the twerd skirt set Willow had chosen. The reas ons were straightforward.

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First, the causellia series hdat been sold in Monorsil this season, making it less accessi ble and less lipped.

The designs leaned toward **a** more sophisticated **and** elegant aesthetic, the **kind** often f avored by the princess comments of Vinston Lucy hasda particular liking for this style, s o she'd arranges for the series to be brought in from overseas. It ruded understated luxu ry and refinement.

Second, the tweed fabric had been overexposed by influencers on social **media**. Everyo ne raved about how wearing it turned a girl into a true socialite, so countless knockoffs flooded th e market, fueling its popularing

The tweed senses **had** also been sent to the **Davis** residence cashier, but Lucy had dis missed it as overstone and cliché. Instead, she kept the camellia gown for hana

Thana hadnt worn the gown yet. Willow was getting a great deal to get it **is** contapensati on.

But to Elana, it was just a dress. She didn't care, Letting Willow have it was no big deal.

When the servant delivered the dress. Eliana **was** still in class.

The servant took the quilt to the office and entrusted it to Eli to hand it over to Eliane

After class, Eli came into the room. "Eliana, your dress has arrived"

"Got in Eliana walked over, took the package, and handed it directly to Willow, who was sitting in the front row.

The Chanel shopping bag had long been discarded. Instead, the servant had used a plain white paper to wrap the dress, while the clamorous appearance of the original boutique packaging.

naturally lacked the

Still, this bag wasn't inferior to the designer shopping bags in any way, he was an exclusive Chanel bag gifted only realer top-tier members. Plenty of bloggers online even styled it as a fashion accessory, jokingly calling it Chanel's most expensive handbag

After

all, Chanel only gifted these bags to their most elite members, Regular customers had no access to them. A single bag like this was enough to confirm someone's status as a true socialite.

"Here's your replacement outfit," Eluna said, placing the bag on the desk before heading toward the back of the classroom.

What to say, but Wendy quickly sneered, "What is this bag? Something you dug out of the **trash**? It looks

Willow froze, momentarily unsure of what to say

Charlene added with a scoff, "Exactly! What could possibly be inside this bag Eliana, Willow's outfit was a limited-edition piece. A single jacket costs over 10 thousand dollars! Do you even understand what limited edition means?"

Sharryl wrinkled her nose in distaste, pushing the bag away slightly, "Ugh, what kind of garbage is this??"

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Hearing this, **Eliana** paused and **said**, "Why don't you open it first?"

Eliana assumed they'd recognize the bag, but clearly, she'd overestimated their taste,

Even if they don't recognize the bag, it doesn't matter. The camellia elements on the outfit are one of Chanel's signature designs. Once they pull the clothes out, they should realize what it is. Eliana thought.

Seeing Eliana being ridiculed, Willow was secretly pleased.

Since there were still many classmates around, **including** Eli, Willow held back her laughter to maintain her facade.

Feigning generosity, she pulled the clothes out of the bag and said with a tone of mock kindness, "Eliana, even if you **can't** afford to replace it, it doesn't matter. "I'll forgive you if you just apologize. There's no need to act all high and mighty. Sure, my tweed skirt set wasn't cheap, but I'm not going to pressure you over a mere outfit. That would be beneath me

As Willow opened the packaging, she hadn't expected Eliana to offer anything impressive.

When she pulled out the clothes, her face twisted in disdain. The outfit had gray accents, which clashed entirely with her taste.

Willow grumbled unhappily, "Eliana, I'm not picky, but you could at least try to pick something decent. This gray is so outdated. I mean, even if you'd given me something from an average brand, I wouldn't have complained."

Willow's words trailed off the moment she spotted the camellia shaped brooch on the chest and the camellia embroidery on the collar. She instantly recognized the signature Chanel design. A quick glance at the tags confirmed her suspicion. It **was** indeed a Chanel piece.

Wait. Eliana actually got me something from Chanel? Willow thought, genuinely taken aback.

But her shock quickly turned to smug satisfaction. Still... This design screams seasons past. There's no way it **can** compare to my tweed skirt set. Mine is this season's **limited** release.

Willow narrowed her eyes to Eliana. "Where on earth did you even get this outfit?"

"This is so tacky and hideous"

"Eliana, if you're going to replace Willow's clothes, at least pick something respectable. I mean, I expected a tweed **skin** set to match hers, not some hideous garbage. What's with this dull **gray**? It's so ugly and outdated"

Willow held the outfit at arm's length. Meanwhile, **Wendy** rested her chin on her hand, shooting a **mocking** glance at the outfit as though it were a joke.

But then as sunlight hit the white glove bag, the Chanel logo faintly reflected back, catching Wendy's eye. Her mocking expression faltered, replaced by one of **astonishment**.

Wait a second. That bag. Could it actually be what they call the most expensive **Chanel membership** tote online? Wendy's thoughts raced as she grabbed the bag for a closer inspection.

Eliana took a step closer, calmly **taking** hold of one sleeve of the jacket, and said. "This **isn't** gray. Technically, it's crystal silver. The camellia embellishments are one of Chanel's most iconic elements. Just like your tweed skirt set, this is also from this **year's** collection."

As soon as Eliana finished, Charlene and Shaeryl jumped at the chance to undermine her.

"From this year's collection? Are you joking? This outfit doesn't look anything like a new release.

"Exactly. The design and details are so outdated it screams years-old leftovers. Just admit it. Why insist it's from the latest collection?"

Willow placed the clothes down and added. "Eliana, I've been to the boutique recently, and this wasn't even there. Stop lying. If it's really new, why wasn't it in the store!"

Sitting nearby, Wendy had been carefully examining the bag. As sunlight hit **it** again, the subtle yet undeniable Chanel logo shimmered. This was

the real deal.

When Chanel first announced the exclusive perks for its top-tier members, many bloggers on the internet mocked it, calling it an ugly bag that looked completely ordinary. A lot of people ridiculed Chanel's service, complaining **that** after spending so much money, all they got in return was such a plain, simple bag. It was just too lowbrow.

However, it wasn't until someone took the bag into sunlight that its true luxury became apparent. The Chanel logo, **invisible** under normal light, reflected subtly in the **sun**.

Over time, this bag gradually became a **go-to** item for some fashion influencers **on** international social media.

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Elana actually has this bag? Could she be a top-tier Chand member too? Wendy thought, astonished,

Wendy quickly reached for the outfit to examine it more closely. As she unfolded the jacket, she instantly recognized it. It **was** the same as by Vination Princess

The camellia embroidery on the collar was the hallmark of Chanel's latest collection

Chanel's camellia series **had always** been a timeless classic. There was a reason. Classics never go out of style and exude sophistication and elegance. Trendy items might lose their appeal in just a few years, but a classic piece remains fashionable even after five.

This outfit was trending on international social media but hadn't gained much traction in Monosil because this collection wasn't released domestically

How did Eliana manage to get her hands on this? I have to admit, her taste is better than I thought, Wendy mused.

Wendy placed the outfit on the table **and said**. "This is indeed Chanel's Latest collection"

"What? Charlene exclaimed

"That's impossible. Shacryl said skeptically.

Willow turned to Wendy, frowning. "Wendy, are you sure about this outfit!"

"Yes," Wendy replied confidently. "It's a new release. No doubt about it. Keep it."

Still unconvinced, Willow pressed. "Wendy, are you absolutely sure this is new? You're not mistaken?"

Wendy, annoyed by the questioning, snapped. "Do you think I wouldn't even recognize it! Not only is this a new piece, but it's the same design worn by the princess herself. Go check the news if you don't believe me!"

Wendy shifted her gaze away and added, "This outfit isn't available in Monosil it wasn't part of the domestic release. It's far more popular internationally **and** much **harder** to get than your tweed skirt set

Willow was totally stunned. Even if the gown wasn't trending, the fact that **it was** associated with the princess gave it undeniable prestige.

Eliana glanced at Wendy, thinking. Thankfully, Wendy's got good taste. Otherwise, I'd have had to explain everything to **Willow** myself

Willow **might** have wealth, but she lacked the perspective to match in

"Willow," Eliana said calmly, "even if you don't understand its value; it doesn't matter. The other socialite at the birthday party **will**." With that, Eliana turned and walked away.

Furious at being mocked, Willow shot a sarcastic remark at Eliana's **retreating** figure. **Well, thank** you so much, Eliana! Though you couldn't attend the birthday party yourself, you went out of your way to send me this outfit. Don't worry, I won't let your efforts go to waste."

Willow was clearly mocking Eliana for being unable to attend the party.

Eliana chuckled softly. "Then I hope you steal the show"

Just **as** their exchange ended, two **figures** appeared at the **classroom** door. Eli turned and saw Natalia. "Natalia, what are you doing here?" she **asked**.

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Natalia had spent **ilaya** pondering the matter before finally deciding to invite Eliana in person.

It wasn't that she had genuinely come to terms with the idea. She simply had no other option. Natalia didn't **want** to extend the invitation herself

someone else approached Eliana, Eliana might refuse,

Natalia figured that her own presence would increase the likelihood of success.

She had timed her arrival to coincide with the end of class, but when she got there, she was surprised to find Eli still present.

Natalia hesitated at the doorway, her expression briefly stiffening. "Class isn't over yet?"

– Eli glanced up and replied, “Oh, no, it’s already dismissed. Are you here to see some one?”

Everyone in the **class** turned to look at the door, their eyes landing on Natalia

Willone was the first to greet her. “Thi, Natalia, what brings you here?”

Among the classmates, only Willow and Wendy joined the dance club, Willow immediately assumed Natalia was there to see them

Natalia walked into the classroom under the curious pizes of her peers.

Eliana, who had been standing in the middle of the rout moments ago, was now making her way toward the back after selling the **issue** with Willow.

To

hana’s surprise, Natalia suddenly called out from behind her. “Hey, Eliana”

The students were stunned. Even Willow was taken aback, wondering, Could Natalia **really** be here for Eliana! That’s impossible

Eliana turned around, her expression calm. “What do you want!!

Natalia paused for a moment before speaking. “**Are** you free this Saturday?”

And if La am?” Eliana asked.

“I’m inviting you to my birthday party,” Natalia said directly

After a second, the

the room erupted.

“Holy crap, Natalia’s here to invite Eliana to her birthday party? She came in person?”

“Didn’t someone say Eliana wasn’t even on the guest list? What’s this, then?”

That’s ridiculous_!

Willow’s face froze

Even **Wenly** frowned, finding it hard to believe. “Why would Natalia personally invite Eliana? What **makes** Elana so special

Previously, **Natalia** had extended a group invitation to all the dance club members, including Willow and Wendy.

Eliana's face briefly registered a **flicker** of confusion and surprise. She hadn't expected Natalia to invite her since they were far from being friends.

Though Natalia's birthday party was considered a prestigious event at school, Elara couldn't care less..

She had **no** interest in attending a so-called high-class gathering, especially one where she'd have no close friends to accompany her. It would be nothing short of awkward. Eliana wasn't the type to chase after superficial recognition.

"Sorry, I'm busy tomorrow" Eliana said firmly before turning back toward her seat without hesitation.

Natalia stood there, stunned by the blunt rejection. Although she had anticipated this outcome, she hadn't expected Eliana **to be so** unyielding, refusing without even a moment's consideration.

Accompanying Natalia **was** Yulila, who stepped forward to stand beside her. Staring at Eliana's retreating figure, Yulila said sharply, "Hey, Eliana! Natalia came all the way here to invite you, and **you're** just going to brush her off? Do you even know how lucky you are?"

arrogant

"There are so

many people who would kill for this chance, and you just throw it away. What makes you think you have the right to be so arrogant? Yulila had always found Eliana's aloof attitude unbearable, though there was little she could do about it.

Elana turned slightly and **glanced** at Yulila, her tone irritable. "Huh? Hah, isn't being personally invited by Natalia something to be proud of? Maybe next

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time, think before asking such a ridiculous question"

“You How dare you be so rude to me?” Yulila snapped.

“You **ask** for it,” Eliana said coolly,

Yulila’s **face** flushed **with** anger. She opened her mouth **to** retort, but Natalia tugged her back. “Forget it. Let’s go

Yuhla dida’s mind arguing, but **Natalia wasn’t** about to let herself be further embarrassed. The two left the classroom together.

Elana braded to the back of the room and left with Stella,

Meanwlule, Willow and Wendy looked unerly dejected.

They had been boasting in **class** for **days** about their **invitation** to **Natalia’s** birthday party, flaunting it as a point of pride. Not too long ago, they mocked Eliana, claiming she wasn’t worthy of an invitation.

But now, it was so fronic. Natalia had shown up personally to invite Eliana, only to be rejected outright

Wendy, especially burned with jealousy. If she had known things would turn out this way, she never would **have** joined Willow bragging about being **invited** to Natalia’s party in the first place.

Eliana and Stella left the classroom together. **Curious, Stella** asked, “Elana, why didn’t you want to go in Natalia’s birthday partyin

“You know the kind of people who show up to Natalia’s parties,” Eliana replied. “I don’t **get** along with them, and going would just create more trouble. Besides, I **doubt Natalia** actually wants me there for any friendly reason. She’s probably got something else in mind.”

Earlier, before the buzz about **Natalia’s** birthday party spread through the school, **Natalia** had gone out of her **way** to invite Landon

Bur judging by Landon’s reaction that day, he didn’t seem interested in attending

So now that Natalia was inviting

ng Eliana, it wouldnt be surprising if she had ulterior motives. If Eliana went to the party, there was a chance Landon and **his** friends might tag along. Ellana hated the idea of being used as a pawns.

If she and Natalia had been close, she wouldn’t have minded helping her out this once, But since they weren’t, there was no reason to play along with **Natalia’s** schemes

Stella nodded. “That makes sense. Honestly, it’s probably better if you don’t go

It didn’t take long for word to spread around the school that Eliana had nixed down Natalia’s invitation

Opinions were split. Some thought Eliana was being ungrateful, while others admired her **for** not bowing to pressure for something so trivial.

Regardless, the fallout solidified the antagonistic relationship between Natalia and Eliana.

Natalia had taken the initiative to extend an olive branch, only **to** be snubbed in front of the entire class. There was no doubt that their mutual disdain had deepened.

By 4 PM **that** afternoon, the school’s tennis center had unveiled a batch of new equipment, retiring the **old** gear

Students buzzed about Eliana’s bold rejection of Natalia’s invitation, many cheering her on.

The tennis club, known for its wealthy members, had always been **at** odds with the dance club. They **had** little respect for **Natalia** or her so-called elite gathering

“Ella, well done! That’s exactly the right **way** to deal with Natalia. She acts like everyone’s dying **to** be around her?”

“Exactly! I’ve never liked her

Eliana acknowledged

their support with a small smile before heading off to warm up for training.

After finishing her warm-ups, she spotted Cameron and his friends entering the tennis center.

She walked over to chat with them briefly when her phone suddenly **rang** with an upbeat ringtone, it was a call from Lucy “Hi Mom,” Eliana answered.

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Lucy's gentle voice came

came through the line. "Eliana, come home a little early today. We're going out for dinner tonight."

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While Eliana answered a call, Thomas peeled an orange and casually **said**, "Did you **guys** know? Matilda got off the plane and came back today"

Adam replied, "She's back today? Some time **ago**, I heard she planned to step down from the spotlight."

Landon

nchuckled. "Looks like Cameron's family will have to set up another table for the New Year celebration this year!"

Cameron, sitting nearby, said. "This time, she's coming back to switch careers"

Thonus looked surprised. "Huh? Switch careers? To what is she leaving the military!"

Cameron replied, "She's probably going into news anchoring. The position's already lined up."

The Palmer family had one daughter, who was injured during a mission last time. This time, she returned to Dratora City to recuperate. Given her age, it was also the right time for her to settle down.

Cameron knew a bit more of the inside story than the others. In any case, once Matilda returned, she would likely become a news anchor for the military channel.

Once **Eliana** finished her call, she said while bending down to pack her tennis racket, "We won't be training today. I need to head home early. It seems my dad's old comrade's daughter has returned, and we're having dinner together tonight."

Thomas **said**. "Oh, you mean Maride?"

Eliana paused momentarily and replied, "Yeah, you know her too, right?"

Adam added. "We were just talking about her a moment **ago**."

Landon said. "Cameron mentioned **that** she's probably going to become a news anchor this time she's back"

Eliana paused for a moment. Cameron's guess turned out to be correct. From Eliana's memories of her previous encounter, Marilda became a news **anchor**. She hadn't expected Cameron to be so well-informed.

"Alright, I'm leaving now. See you **tomorrow**—po, actually, see you next week, Eliana said, waring at them while carrying her tennis racket. She quickly left the tennis **court** and headed straight out of the school.

Cameron watched Eliana **walk** away, her figure slowly disappearing. Turning back to the others, **he said**, "I'll be leaving now"

Cameron had accompanied the team **to** supervise the **installation** of the new equipment, though his presence **wasn't** strictly necessary. He'd hoped **to** see Eliana, but he decided to do the same since she had already left

After Eliana returned to the Davis family, she changed **into** a fresh set of clothes **and** joined them for dinner.

At Sunway Hotel, **Sebastian** had reserved a private room in advance, waiting for the Paliner family **so** arrive. Since it was a reunion of old friends, formality was unnecessary. After giving them the room number. Sebastian settled in the private room to wait

Eliana sat beside Lucy, with Owen on her right. She noticed that Owen seemed distracted, so she called, "Owen."

Owen didn't hear her "Owen, Eliana called again.

"Huh?" Owen snapped out of his thoughts and turned to look at Eliana. "Eliana, what's wrong!"

Eliana smiled and asked, "What are **you** daydreaming about?"

Owen paused for a moment, his gaze flickering before he sighed softly. "Maybe **it's** because we haven't seen each other in a long time. I wonder

what **she's** like now."

Eliana replied. "That's true. I heard you and Matilda grew up together, right"

Owen and Matilda were less than a year apart in age. Owen was born in early winter, while Matilda was born in summer. The two were close in age and attended the same school from elementary through high school.

Later, Owen pursued a degree in **business** administration, while Matilda went to a military academy

Matilda had a great personality. When they were children, she kept her hair short, and they would play mischievously together, forming a deep bond. It **wasn't** until she got her first period in middle school that Owen truly realized **Matilda** was a girl.

In his memory, it was during the summer of their senior **year** when school had already ended late after the evening study session. Thinking of

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Matilda **as** a girl, Lucy asked Owen to walk her **back** further that night. They ate ice cream together before Owen sent Matilda home.

When they were almost home, Matilda stopped under the streetlight, turned around, and , with the half-eaten ice cream stick in her mouth, **asked** Owen which school he was planning to attend.

Since Owen was likely to pursue a finance-related **major**, he mentioned that he might study abroad. Matilda paused momentarily, then replied that she was attending a military academy.

“Oh, okay” That moment marked the beginning of their separation. At the time, Owen didn't think much of it. Their school didn't seem vital since they would still see each other in the future. He waved at Matilda and said, “Go on, it's time for me to leave too.”

“**Wait.**” Matilda pulled the ice cream stick out of her mouth and handed it to Owen

The stick engraved the words: [A bright future ahead]. That year, it was popular to have messages carved on ice cream sticks, like a surprise box- once the ice cream was finished, one would find a blessing or wish engraved on the stick,

Owen took the ice cream stick and heard Matilda's clear, melodic voice. Then, I'll wish **us** both a bright future ahead”

After a long time, when he graduated from university, Owen returned, while Matilda went to the border. They never met again. What Owen remembered most clearly was those words.

Owen snapped out of it and told Eliana. "It's funny how our memories improve with age. I didn't think she was **special** when we were together, but I started to miss her after we separated."

The person who wasn't particularly remarkable has now become the ideal choice in Owen's heart. Eliana smiled, understanding the meaning behind Owen's words.

A **sound came** from outside the private room five minutes later—the server was bringing the Palmer family in. The door to the room was pushed open, and everyone quickly **stood** up to greet them.

Two **people** with an exquisite presence walked in from outside the door. Hudson Palmer was dressed in a gray administrative **jacket**, and his wife, standing beside him, wore a beige coat and a gentle and graceful demeanor. "Oh, Hudson, you're here!" Sebastian called.

"Sebastian!" Hudson called. Sebastian laughed as he walked around the chair to embrace Hudson,

Gisselle Clemons, standing beside Hudson, smiled gracefully and called out to Lucy, Lucy

you guys finally arrived. Let me introduce **you** Lucy said "This is Eliana. Owen, greet them."

"Gisselle, you

Owen stepped forward. "Gisselle, Hudson," he greeted,

Gisselle **nodded** at him and said, "Owen, long time nurse" She then turned her gaze to Eliana, her smile still bright. "Ah, this is the girl you mentioned; you've found her! That's wonderful. She looks just **like** you did when you were young

Eliana smiled warmly. "Hello, Gisselle and Hudson," she greeted.

Hudson noticed Eliana and clapped his hands together. "Well, this is great! Our first meeting and I forgot to bring a gift for you?"

Sebastian **said**. "Well, with our relationship, there's no need to stand on ceremony. Please be seated, Wait, where's **Matilda**? Why isn't she here?"

Gisselle replied, "Matilda said she just got off the plane, which was delayed. She's taking a taxi **and** should arrive in about ten minutes. We came ahead so you wouldn't have to wait too long."

Lucy said. "I see. No worries, let's sit down first and under the dishes:

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Everyone took their seats, and the atmosphere in the private room was warm and lively. "Since Eliana returned, you've kept her like a treasure.

gl? Now that we brally see her, she is a treasure indeed!"

The room was filled with laughter. "Where is Eliana studying?" Gisselle asked.

Instead University Lay replied,

"Instead University, that's great!" Gisselle said.

Lucy proudly said, "Thana got in by herself. Impressive, right?"

While they w

were chatting, Cisselle's phone rang. It was a call from Matilda.

Matilda had already arrived at the hotel's lobby hat wasn't sure which floor to go to, so s he called to ask. Cisselle said, "I'll come down **to** get you."

Lucy stopped her, saying. "Hey, Gisselle, you don't need to go. **Owen**, you and Eliana g o down to pick up Matilda"

Eliana nodded. "**Alright**," she said. They left the private room together and took the elevator to meri Matilda.

Eliana and Owen immediately spotted the woman by the entrance as they stepped off t he elevator into the bustling hotel lobby. Her confident presence was unmistakable. She was **a** striking figure in a black wool coat, ber short hair framing a face that exuded authority

She looked at her phone, stond straight, and became a striking figure in the crowd. "Mat ilda," Owen called.

Hearing the voice. Matilda turned around. Her expression paused for a moment before s he smiled at them. Then, with **long** strides, she said gracefully. "Owen, it's been a long t ime."

Owen pointed to Elians beside him and said, "This is my sister, Ehana"

Matilda smiled and said, “Ah, I know. My mom mentioned you when I came back. Hello, Elina.”

Eliana smiled and greeted, “Hello, Matilda”

Owen said, “Let’s gouthey’re waiting for us upstairs”

“Okay” Matilda replied

The three of them took the elevator together. Matilda put away her phone and spoke to them inside the elevator. “You’ve **had** a good few years. haven’t you?”

“Tin doing fine. How about you! I heard you got injured,” Owen asked.

“Just a **minor** injury. My parents had been urging me to return since I hadn’t been home in years, so I finally decided to return. After all, my home was here

The real reason was that, at approaching thirty and still single, her parents had been pressuring her about marriage for a long time, She couldn’t avoid it any longer and had to come back

“Being a lady–in–waiting takes its toll, doesn’t it, Matilda” Owen joked.

“You weren’t patient **either**, Owen” Matilda replied.

Eliana stood between Owen and Matilda, the elevator doors reflecting like a mirror Glancing up, she discreetly stepped back as they joked around, their easy camaraderie filling the small space.

Once they returned to the private room, Lucy **and** Sebastian warmly embraced Matilda when they saw her, then sat down together to enjoy their meal.

At the dinner table, they casually **chatted** about their unmarried status. Gisselle and Lucy both felt a bit troubled by their children’s situations.

Hearing that Lucy and Sebastian had introduced many women to Owen without success, Matilda teased. “Oh. Mr. Davis, such high standards! After studying abroad for a few years, I didn’t realize that you must have developed a taste for foreign girls, becoming more picky, huh?”

Owen chuckled and replied, “Oh, yes, that’s right. I wouldn’t go for someone like **you**, anyway?”

Lucy playfully smacked Owen’s hand. “What are you saying? Eat more and keep your mouth shut,”

Owen scoffed, and Eliana chuckled. It was clear that the two of them had a great relationship. After all these **years**, there was **no** sign of them becoming distant.

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After dinner, the two families parted ways at the hotel entrance. Once they got in the car, Lacy asked Eliana, "So, what do you think of Marilda?"

"She's pretty nice. Matilda has **an** outstanding personality." After all, with all her years in the military, Matilda's character and integrity were beyond reproach. She was undoubtedly a high-quality woman.

Lucy said, "Tagrer Matilda's a great girl. Eve watched her grow up; her personality has always been good. After she returned from the military, she settled in Bratora City. **You** two should hang out more **and** spend some time together."

"Okay, Eliana replied.

The long-awaited tournament finally began in the middle of the

Landon led the team to compete and brought home several gold medals. During the school's Monday assembly, the tennis club was publicly praised **and** nominated for its achievements. A custom banner was even made, and the tennis club members were called on stage to receive it.

Landon asked Eliana to go on stage to receive the banner and take a photo with the principal. The photo would be displayed in the school allowing future generations of students to see it. It was a rare honor that most students would never receive.

Willow watched Eliana on the **stage**, a deep worry rising in her heart. Although Eliana's life path was slightly different from the last one, she felt the overall direction hadn't changed. She had slowly begun to shine increasingly, becoming increasingly outstanding and dazzling.

Could it be... that in this time, she'll become **just as** successful as she was in the end? she thought. Willow lowered her head, hiding the hatred in her eyes.

"No, I won't let Eliana succeed. If Eliana succeeds in this time, then what was the point of me encountering her once again! She robbed my chance to compete in the finals of the university tournament. I will get my revenge for this! Willow thought, the hatred in her heart growing stronger.

Willow thought for a moment. One last major event this semester seemed to be the joint activity between Isonstead University and Aylesbury Ancient Town—the event aimed to promote the ancient craft of puppetry and showcase the town’s **unique** local delicacies.

The tourism bureau supported this event and even invested significant funding to rebuild Aylesbury Ancient Town, all to boost the local tourism industry.

The school eagerly accepted the event and handed over the responsibility of organizing it to the student council.

Willow planned to use this event to make the most of her remaining **time** with Roman at school, hoping to increase his favor towards her. But none, seeing how well Eliana was doing at school, Willow realized that for this event, she would have to prepare for both **possibilities**.

Two weeks later, the class advisor made an important announcement in class. “Students, there will be no classes next week. The school has **organized** a three-day trip to the ancient town, and participation is voluntary”

“An **ancient** town?”

“Will we get to stay in the ancient town?”

“Advisor, is it free?”

“Can we go home if we choose not to participate?”

The advisor remained silent. The students raised many questions. In the back row, Eliana and Stella looked up at the podium

The advisor explained, “It’s not free, but the class funds will cover the costs for our class. Don’t worry, the school will arrange accommodation and transportation. You can eat at the guesthouse, but **if** you choose to make any personal purchases, the costs will be deducted from the class **fund**”

The advisor continued, “It’s not mandatory, so you **can** choose not to participate. If you decide not to go, the school will give you a three-day break. and you can choose to **go** home.”

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COMMENT

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The school arranged for different departments to go in batches. The Acting Department's trip was scheduled for the following week. After collecting the number of participants over the next two days, they were ready to depart.

After some discussion, most of the class signed up, though a few preferred to go home instead. Overall, the majority **were** excited about joining the trip.

After counting the participants, the advisor instructed them to select a team leader to coordinate with the student council. "Everyone can sign up. If no one volunteers, I'll assign someone," the advisor said.

In the back row, Stella whispered, "Who would want to lead? It's so exhausting. What if the students don't listen and something **goes** wrong? Who will take responsibility? Maybe Willow would be willing..."

Before Stella could finish speaking, Willow in the front row eagerly volunteered. Stella muttered, "See? I knew it. Willow was going to volunteer."

However, Willow responded unexpectedly. "Advisor, Eliana, is better suited to be our class leader. She has **great** leadership skills. During military training, she led the team to good results. Plus, her professional abilities are the best in our class. I'm sure she can be an excellent leader."

Eliana was speechless. Stella whispered, "What the heck? Willow has lost it."

Everyone in the class knew Willow and Eliana didn't get along, but they never expected Willow to recommend Eliana **as** the team leader.

The advisor nodded after hearing Willow's words. "Indeed, I also have a preference for her. Eliana, what do you think?"

Eliana hesitated, "Advisor, I'm afraid I'm not up to the task."

Willow quickly turned to her and said, "Eliana, how can you say you're not up to it? **If** you can't do it, who in the **class** would **dare** to claim they're better than you?"

With that flattering praise, Willow essentially pushed Eliana into a high position, making it hard for her to back down. Eliana's academic performance had rightfully earned her the top spot in the class, and no one could surpass her.

The advisor was most pleased with Eliana. If no one else volunteered, he had already planned to choose her. Since Willow had now recommended her, it gave him the perfect excuse to decide that Eliana would officially be the team leader.

“Eliana, there’s no need to decline. This time, you’ll be the team leader, the advisor said

“Alright,” Eliana replied. The advisor was quite pleased that she agreed and immediately handed over the class fund, instructing her to manage it appropriately.

The class fund was collected at the beginning of the semester. Although a significant amount had already been spent on previous activities, Willow had also contributed, leaving a surplus from last semester.

This semester, the total amount was just over 2,000 dollars. 2,000 dollars wasn’t a huge sum, but it wasn’t small either.

After all, there were few wealthy students like Willow and Wendy. Most regular university students had a monthly allowance of only a few hundred dollars, almost equivalent to their living expenses for two months,

Handing the money over to Eliana was a sign of trust. Losing it would undoubtedly damage her credibility among the class.

In the afternoon, three students who weren’t going to the town came to Eliana after finishing the physical education class. After discussing it with the advisor, they were here to claim their share of the class funds. “Eliana, the advisor asked us to come collect our portion.”

The three of them were supposed to receive 200 dollars. Eliana said little since the advisor requested, leading them to the locker to get the money. However, when they reached the locker and opened it, she was shocked to find that all the class funds in her bag were gone.

Eliana’s expression momentarily froze as she flipped through the compartments of her bag, but the money was still missing. Stella noticed something was off and stepped forward, whispering, “Eliana, what’s wrong?”

Eliana said, “The class funds are gone.”

Stella widened her eyes in disbelief. “How could that be?”

Eliana remained calm, but Stella was visibly shocked. As an ordinary student, she could easily understand how devastating it would feel if the money disappeared from her hands.

The three students waiting nearby noticed that Eliana was taking too long to get the money and walked over to **ask**, “How much longer?”

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“What’s going on? **Are** you not planning to give it to us?”

“The **advisor** said so, so either you don’t want to give it, or you can’t get it out!”

Eliana calmly returned her bag to the locker and said, “Yes, I can’t give it to you. The class funds have been stolen.”

The three of them were taken aback. “What!”

One of them shouted, “Everyone, come quick! Eliana lost the **class** fund! Our money’s gone!”

At that moment, everyone **was** changing clothes after their physical education class. The loud shout instantly drew everyone’s attention to the

room.

“What? Our money is gone?”

“What’s going on? Does that mean we can’t go to the ancient town?”

“Eliana is so unreliable. She **was** just given the class funds this morning, and now, by the afternoon, is it gone? She didn’t end up using it herself, did she?”

“Is the class fund gone for sure? What are we going to do now?”

Although the amount wasn’t much, the class funds comprised everyone’s contributions, and losing them would cause an uproar. Faced with their doubts, Eliana could only respond, “I didn’t use the class funds. They’re lost, but I’ll get them back.”

“Get it back? How are you going to do that? It’s money, and we don’t know when it went missing. It might have already been used!”

“Yeah, seriously. If I’d known, I wouldn’t have gone. At least I could have gotten my share back this morning instead of finding out the class funds were gone by the afternoon.”

“Eliana, you’re responsible for this!”

“If you can’t get the money back, you’ll have to pay it from your pocket...”

The crowd continued to murmur, and in the corner of the room, Willow smiled faintly and thought, ‘The show has begun!’

Soon, someone reported the incident to the advisor. He was shocked—he hadn’t expected something like this to happen. He had trusted Eliana so much and wondered how the money could disappear just hours after he handed it to her.

However, the advisor didn’t suspect that Eliana had taken the money for herself since she wasn’t lacking in funds. It seemed much more likely that the money had been stolen.

“The girls’ locker room needs to be scoured. Was there anyone who left while you were in physical education class?” the advisor asked.

“Yes,” Shaeryl said, “I remember Stella went out!”

Stella widened her eyes in disbelief. “I just went to the restroom! And I even saw Willow and Charlene go out together. Why aren’t you mentioning *that*?”

There were no surveillance cameras in the girls’ changing room, so it was challenging to determine who had stolen the money. The only footage available was from the hallway cameras, but that wouldn’t help much, as many people passed through the corridor at various times.

Willow said, “Advisor, I have nothing to hide. I wouldn’t bother stealing 2,000 dollars. Feel free to check my locker first.”

Seeing Willow’s eagerness, Eliana remained calm, furrowing her brows just a little.

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2,000 dollars wasn’t huge, but it wasn’t small either. Besides, the theft of money was a serious matter. The advisor would conduct a thorough investigation of the women’s locker room. Since Willow wasn’t afraid of being checked, she volunteered to be the first to have her belongings searched.

The advisor agreed and walked over to Willow, opening her locker to begin the search. There weren’t many items inside, and the money should have been easy to find. After a quick search, however, no money **was** found.

The advisor said, “Nothing”

Willow crossed her arms, her tone laced with disdain. “2,000 dollars isn’t enough for me to buy a hair accessory.”

“Everyone, please check your lockers and bags,” the advisor said, pressing his lips together before addressing the group.

“We need to find the missing class funds. If **we** can’t, we’ll have to report it to the police. If you have any information, please tell me privately. If someone took the money but wants to return it, I’m willing to forget this ever happened.”

The advisor tried to persuade everyone, but no one responded. The only option left was to start searching the lockers.

Eliana stood silently to the side, not saying a word. Stella whispered, “Eliana, maybe you should think again—where could the money have been lost?”

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Eliana replied, “It was always in my bag. Besides attending the physical education class, the bag has never left my side.”

Stella said, “Well, the only time there was a chance was in *the* locker room. It couldn’t have been anywhere else. We’ll have to search and see who it

was.”

Eliana quietly waited for the search results. Twenty minutes later, the advisor walked over to Stella’s locker. “Stella, take your things out,” he said.

Stella replied, “Oh, okay.”

As Stella took her bag out of the locker, a few pieces of notes fell out, scattering across the floor.

Everyone in the locker room froze, and Stella was even more stunned. ‘What’s going on... how could there be so much money in my bag?’ she thought.

Shaeryl rushed over, snatched the bag from Stella, and peered inside. Grabbing a wad of bills, she said, “Wow, Advisor! It’s stuffed with cash— There’s gotta be at least a thousand here!” Most importantly, the advisor’s white envelope was nestled among the money containing the class funds.

The advisor frowned and asked, “Stella, how do you explain this? Why do you have so much money in your bag?”

Stella panicked, "I don't know... How could there be money in my bag?" She turned to Eliana and added, "Eliana, I have no idea..."

Stella had no motive to steal the class funds, and it seemed incredibly reckless even to attempt it, especially since she put the money in her bag without discarding the white envelope.

Eliana had trusted her completely, but with so many witnesses and the money found in Stella's possession, it was as if she had been caught red-handed.

At that moment, the crowd around them instantly began to murmur—"Oh my gosh, they found the class funds in Stella's bag. Does that mean she stole it?"

"She was acting so innocent earlier, but if they hadn't searched her bag, she definitely wouldn't have admitted to it."

"Her character is awful!"

"Advisor, Stella stole the money. It's clear as day, with the money and the culprit caught. What else is there to say?"

Charlene chimed in, saying, "Exactly, this is too much. The worst part is that she has such a good relationship with Eliana. To steal her best friend's money—how shameless can she be? Is she trying to set Eliana up?"

Eliana remained silent. Stella immediately shook her head. "I didn't steal the money, and I have no idea why it's in my bag."

Eliana lifted her gaze to glance at Willow, standing in the corner. Willow gave Eliana a faint smile, almost as if silently telling her, 'Didn't see this coming, did you? Earlier, you had Stella play a trick on me, and now, this incident will lead to a punishment for her—it looks like it's her

comeuppance!

The advisor's face darkened. "Stella, you must give me a reasonable explanation! Otherwise, I will report this to the school for serious disciplinary action!"

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Stella didn't know how to explain her innocence. Her mind was in a complete mess. 'I didn't steal the money. Even if I had, why would I be stupid enough to put it in my bag? That would be way too foolish...'

Shacryl interrupted her, "Why wouldn't it be possible? You and Eliana are close; she wouldn't suspect you, but maybe that's what you were counting on!"

The people around them started saying, "Yeah, what's so impossible? Betraying a friend is hardly uncommon these days."

"Stella, you've been caught red-handed. What more do you have to say? Advisor, her attitude is so bad. Just report it to the school and punish her so she learns her lesson!"

Honestly, it's just unbelievable. How did someone like her end up in our class?"

At that moment, Eliana, who had been silent until now, finally spoke up. She looked at the advisor and said, "I believe Stella didn't steal the money."

The advisor replied, "Eliana, I know you're close to Stella, but the evidence is clear. Don't let your friendship cloud your judgment. This matter will be reported to the school for serious handling. Such an incident happening at Isonstead University is severe!"

Isonstead University's teacher training program was rigorous, and the school motto emphasizes "Virtue" and "Independence."

A petty theft like this would undoubtedly attract the school's attention. It was easy to imagine that Stella's punishment would be even more severe than the one Yulja received during the last Fall Festival. What awaited Stella could be a significant demerit or even suspension from classes.

Stella was desperately anxious but didn't know how to defend herself. Eliana said, "I have evidence proving Stella is not a thief."

Willow furrowed her brows. 'How is that possible? Did this bitch leave herself an escape route?' she thought.

The advisor asked, "What is it?"

Eliana said calmly, "I sprinkled some highlighter on the edge of the envelope earlier."

Highlighter? the advisor thought. He asked, "What do you mean?"

Eliana explained, "Before class, when I was changing clothes, I was worried about the class funds being unsafe in my bag, so I lightly applied some highlighter on the edge of the envelope. Anyone who has opened the envelope will have traces of gold dust on their fingertips."

The highlighter was a shimmer shade from an eyeshadow palette used to create a highlighting effect. A subtle shimmer on the white envelope wasn't noticeable, and anyone who rushed to steal wouldn't have paid attention to such small details.

"The highlighter would leave a trace on the fingertips. All we need to do is check for any shimmer on Stella's fingertips," Eliana said.

"Then why didn't you mention this earlier?" the advisor asked.

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The reason Eliana **hadn't** mentioned it earlier was simple: the search took time. Someone might have wiped off the shimmer from their fingertips if she had brought it up sooner amidst the confusion. That was why Eliana had kept quiet until now.

Eliana said, "I think it's best if everyone raises their hands and we check individually."

The advisor nodded. "You're right. Alright, everyone, raise your hands now!"

In the corner, Willow froze in shock. She hadn't expected Eliana to have this backup plan. She lowered her head and glanced at her fingertips.

She hadn't noticed it before, but when she looked at her fingertips, there was indeed a faint layer of shimmer and gold dust. It was hard to spot in dim lighting, but the powder's reflection was clearly visible under bright light. It was the highlighter's unique effect.

Damn it. I didn't expect Eliana to be so cunning,' she thought.

Stella's suspicions were dispelled entirely, as there was no shimmer or gold dust on her fingertips. That meant the money in her bag must have been placed there by someone else.

Stella looked at Eliana with gratitude, her eyes reddening slightly. "Eliana, if you hadn't thought of this, I wouldn't have been able to clear my name no matter what I did."

Eliana smiled faintly at her. "It's okay. If you haven't done anything wrong, no one can wrongfully accuse you." Eliana had already guessed—it was another one of Willow's schemes.

When Willow randomly nominated her as the class leader, Eliana knew something was off. Willow was the type to crave the spotlight, yet this time, she had deliberately given that opportunity to Eliana.

It could only mean she had something to gain. If it weren't for a hidden agenda, Willow wouldn't have so willingly nominated Eliana to be the leader.

Although Eliana wasn't interested in being the leader, she was very curious about what Willow was planning next. Hence, she went along with it, wanting to see what Willow would do.

Eliana had already guessed Willow would target the class funds, so she had left the highlighter on the envelope in advance. Now, she was waiting to see how Willow would try to escape this situation.

Everyone raised their hands, and it became self-evident when someone didn't. "Willow, why aren't you raising your hand?" The advisor asked.

Willow's expression stiffened slightly. "Is this method effective? It seems too stupid."

The advisor replied, "If Stella didn't steal the money, then this is a serious matter, which means someone framed her. We need to get to the bottom of this. Eliana was smart and left a clue. You're not raising your hand because there's a highlighter on your fingers, right?"

Willow's heart skipped a beat, but her expression remained composed. "What are you talking about? I was questioning whether this method would work."

The people around them started to complain as well. "Yeah, raising our hands feels like we're the criminals. We didn't steal anything, so why should we be treated like suspects?"

"Don't let this end up embarrassing if nothing comes of it."

Hearing the crowd's complaints, the advisor clapped his hands. "Alright, alright, everyone, stop complaining. We won't know if we can find anything until we check. Since everyone's here, it's the perfect time to do it. Willow, raise your hand quickly."

Willow's eyelashes fluttered slightly as she slowly raised her hand. But just as she did so, the fire sprinkler in the changing room suddenly activated, and water began to pour down.

"Ah!"

"What's going on?"

“Why is it spraying water?”

Everyone exclaimed in surprise and quickly lowered their hands, covering their heads to shield themselves from the water.

Taking advantage of the situation, Willow quickly rubbed her fingers with water, causing the shimmer and gold dust to slide off and disappear. Seeing this, Eliana rushed over and grabbed Willow’s hand.

Willow’s gaze was sharp. “What are you doing?”

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Eliana said coldly. “Why did **you** rub your fingers just now? You washed off all the highlighter!”

Willow retorted, “I didn’t rub my fingers! Stop making baseless accusations!”

Eliana said, “I saw you rubbing your fingers just now!”

The two began arguing in the misty changing room. The advisor walked outside and adjusted the valve, discovering that someone had triggered the switch outside, activating the sprinkler. After turning off the switch, the water inside stopped.

In that brief moment, everyone was soaked to the bone. The shower valve system was initially designed to detect smoke and serve as a fire safety **measure**. However, it was unclear whether someone had accidentally triggered the switch. Now, everyone was drenched.

Seeing Eliana and Willow still arguing, the instructor stepped forward and separated them. “Alright, enough! Stop fighting.”

“Eliana, I will continue to investigate this matter. Willow, let me see your hand,” he said.

Willow had already rubbed off the highlighter earlier, and without hesitation, she held out her fingers. “There’s no highlighter,” she said.

“She rubbed off the highlighter with water just now!” Eliana exclaimed. She had initially thought there wouldn’t be any surprises, but now an unexpected turn had occurred. Someone accidentally triggered the shower valve outside, intending to help Willow.

Eliana lowered her gaze, smoothing her wet hair, and looked at Willow. “Willow, people may try to deceive, but heaven is watching. You got lucky this time, but there won’t be such good fortune next time.”

Willow feigned innocence and said, “Eliana, I hope you don’t make baseless accusations without evidence. I’ve already shown my fingers to the advisor. On what grounds are you suspecting me? The money isn’t with me; it’s in Stella’s pocket.”

Stella spoke up, “I was the first to check if there was highlighter on my fingers. Also, if I had stolen the money, why would I put it in my own pocket? That would be admitting to it!”

Willow smiled and said, “How would I know what you’re thinking?”

Seeing that they were about to continue arguing, the advisor couldn’t stand it any longer and interrupted. “Alright, alright! Stop arguing. Everyone change your clothes. If anyone doesn’t have spare clothes, go to the office to borrow a hairdryer and dry your hair. Don’t catch a cold.

“You can all leave now!”

The changing room was soaked, and now the school’s maintenance staff must clean it up.

Overall, today was incredibly frustrating. However, at least the class funds were recovered. If the money had been lost, with this kind of incident happening in class, the advisor wouldn’t have been able to escape responsibility.

As everyone dispersed, the advisor privately approached Eliana and asked about the situation earlier. Eliana replied, “I saw Willow rubbing her fingers with water. She has the most suspicious behavior.”

The advisor’s expression grew serious. It wasn’t that he didn’t trust Eliana, but he was cautious about jumping to conclusions. After all, without seeing the evidence firsthand, making a rash judgment could upset Willow and cause further complications.

He couldn’t help but sigh once again. ‘Being a worker is tough,’ he thought.