

## Rewriting Life Chapter 21 – 30

### Chapter 21

Eliana knew all too well the exhaustion that came from working tirelessly for a minor role in her previous life.

Despite graduating from a prestigious acting school, Eliana had spent years struggling in the entertainment industry, constantly thwarted by Willow's spiteful interference.

For six months, Eliana couldn't secure a single role. The few roles she did get were either insignificant or required her to endure grueling action.

#### scenes

While most young actresses opted for the lucrative and easygoing idol dramas, Eliana had no choice but to take on the tougher, low-paying action films: She needed the work to **gain** exposure and grab any opportunity to make a name for herself.

Eliana immersed herself in action roles, learning how to perform all kinds of difficult moves just to get noticed. Starting with minor parts, she eventually managed to land some supporting roles.

Unfortunately, just **as** her career began to show promise, Willow took notice and intervened again,

Suddenly, Eliana found herself without any scripts, not even the smallest roles. Her only option was to work **as** a stunt double, a dangerous job that required her to perform stunts regardless of whether the lead actress dared to or not.

At just over twenty, Eliana endured this **harsh** reality for three **years**. By the time she was nearly thirty, her body felt like it belonged **to a** sixty-year-old

Covered in injuries, she pushed through the pain with determination, even showing up on set with broken bones.

Living under such pressure with no hope in sight **was** a life Eliana grew weary of. If given **a** chance to start **over**, she probably wouldn't even consider her current struggles as hardships. After all, she had faced far worse before.

Eliana didn't bother responding as she quickened her **pace**, running **faster**. Although her physical condition in **this** life hadn't yet reached its previous peak, she was determined to catch up.

With her rich experience, she felt confident her progress was enduring suffering without any reward,

would be swift.

1. She was familiar with hardship and didn't fear it. What she truly dreaded

was being envious.

At lunchtime, Willow proudly displayed the mosquito repellent to the girls, claiming it was a gift from Roman. The other girls were

"Willow, you're amazing! You have such a good connection with the student council president," a girl said.

"Yeah, Roman is so handsome?" someone exclaimed

"Yeah, he is cute Willow, since he gave **you** the repellent personally, maybe he **likes** you," another chimed in

Willow was thrilled, covering her face as she replied, "**Oh, stop** it! I think he was just being **nice because** we go to the same **school**. He's friendly to everyone. Anyway, don't spread rumors. It would be embarrassing

The others laughed. "**Look** at Willow. **She's** so shy!

Nearly, Elana overheard their conversation while sipping water. Since they seemed to be having such a good time, Elana thought she might as well start things up a bit.

Elana anonymously posted on the school for **Breaking** news! Willow **Garcia skips** the student's training session without reason yet gets special treatment compared to her **classmates!**"

The post quickly gained attention

The freshman's training session at Isonstral University was very strict and always attracted interest. **Privileged** exemptions like Willow's were supposedly an open arrival, but few students among them enjoyed such rights.

Naturally, **this** led to outrage against Willow.

By the afternoon, the post had become one of the top live trending topics on the forum. Elana **continued** her training as usual after posting.

Students remained unaware of the post until the evening

That evening, after everyone washed and act-sirmed in dear tents, someone checked the forum on their phone.

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“Oh my gosh! Lank, Willow Garcia is exposed on the forum!”

Rrally

Yeah, it explains why she always looks so good while training. It’s because of special treatment

“This **is** outrageous! We’re exhausted and suffering, but why does she get special treatment?”

“Well, it’s because she has influential parents. This is definitely a case of favoritism!”

The next **day**, Willow greeted everyone, but few **girls** responded. Unbothered, she planned to interact with the boys, only to find them uninterested

Confused, Willow approached Stella, who was close to her, to find out what happened.

Stella replied in a sarcastic tone, “We wouldn’t dare get close to you. You’re the one with special treatment, anyway.”

“What do you mean? Willow was puzzled.

As Stella covered her face with more concealer to hide her rashes, she said, “Check the forum. You’ve caused quite a stir. The whole class is upset about your special treatment. And was something wrong with that sunscreen you gave me? I got an allergic reaction after using it

Willow was briefly taken aback, almost laughing at the sight of Stella’s face, which was so blotchy that even foundation couldn’t hide it.

“How is that possible. Stella? I used the same sunscreen I gave you, and I didn’t **have any** allergic reactions. Maybe you’re allergic to something else. Anyway, I need to go. Check your other makeup. Willow said.

After leaving Willow immediately checked the forum on her phone. When she saw her name trending, her face twisted with anger.

It was no wonder hardly anyone spoke to her today—someone **was** plotting **against** her

In Willow's view, it had to be Eliana, No one else would challenge her like this.

many students already unhappy about the intense training Willow's special treatment was bound to cause their frustration. Willow never imagined being exposed on the forum like this. Determined to fix her reputation, she decided to take action. The next day. Willow

**Willow** arrived at training wearing makeup that made her look pale and exhausted as if she were on the verge of collapse. Sure enough, before the morning exercises even began, the officer noticed her. "Willow **Garcia**, why are you in the lineup! Step out" Willow's eyes were filled with tears, and she stubbornly replied, "No, sir, I want to train Eliana, standing at the back, watched Willow's act with calm detachment. She had expected Willow's act. But this time, she wasn't going to let Willow off easily

with everyone. Please don't worry about **me.**"

The officer said, "Willow, if **you're** sick, you shouldn't be training. Didn't you submit a medical exemption

"Medical exemption?" someone in the lineup murmured.

Willow took the opportunity to say, "Sir, even though I submitted a medical exemption, I'm **okay**. My epilepsy isn't severe. I can handle it. My teammates are already **upset** with me. I can't keep slacking off. **Please** let me train. I can't skip training just because I'm worried about triggering my epilepsy with intense exercises"

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Willow **had a** clever plan to clear her **name**. She casually mentioned to the class that she had epilepsy and **that** intense training could trigger it

When everyone heard her explanation, they finally understood why she hadn't joined the training session. It all seemed reasonable now.

With her goal achieved, Willow dropped the act and left the lineup, looking a bit sad.

Before Willow walked away, she shot Eliana a triumphant glance. Inwardly, she thought Eliana was foolish to think **Eliana** could compete with her using such trivial tricks.

Eliana, however, just gave a slight smile, which unsettled Willow. A chill ran through Willow as she sensed something was off, but she still doubted Eliana **could** truly undermine her.

So, at lunchtime, Willow put on a show of tears and handed out treats to everyone.

She claimed someone was trying to tarnish her name by spreading lies on the forum, hinting that Eliana was the culprit, painting Eliana as a spiteful sister

This strategy worked well. People quickly sided with Willow and blamed Eliana for everything.

“Yeah, it must be Eliana. She’s probably jealous of your status as the real heiress and wants to ruin your reputation. How awful a girl said angrily.

“Exactly. We haven’t known you long, Willow, but who else would post those things on the forum? It has to be someone close to you who doesn’t want you to succeed,” a student analyzed.

think only Eliana seems suspicious. It must be her, someone exclaimed.

“We should be careful around her from now on, another chimed in.

Willow was delighted with their reactions. She had easily swayed these gullible people with a few words and some snacks.

Willow basked in their compliments and even posted her medical exemption on the forum to clear her name,

However, Willow was stunned when the forum erupted again with new evidence.

A post revealed her complete medical examination report from Avragow Hospital a few months ago, which clearly stated she **was** healthy, even slightly overweight.

This medical report wasn’t from long ago, which confirmed its authenticity,

How could such a **drastic** change have occurred in less than a month? The idea that Willow suddenly developed epilepsy seemed too far-fetched.

It **was** clear she had faked the medical exemption to avoid the intense training.

The forum buzzed with discussions

A few still believed Willow’s epilepsy story, but most were convinced she had faked the report, given the hospital’s clear statement of her **good** health

Willow’s reputation suffered yet another blow

Furious, **Willow** confronted Eliana, phone in hand. “Did you **post** any medical report on the forum?”

Eliana leaned casually against a tree, but even glancing at Willow. “Not pretending any more, are you?”

Willow squinted, her anger rising. “Why are you **always** against **me**, Eliana?”

Eliana shrugged. “Against you? You’re the one who keeps **causing** me trouble.”

Seeing

Eliana’s calm expression, Willow felt a surge of frustration and wanted to lash out.

But then she noticed a small group of students **approaching** and switched to her performance mode.

Looking pitiful,

Willow said, “Eliana, I told you I don’t mind you taking these **tricks** Mom and Dad raised you for eighteen years. Even if you don’t care about them, at least show some decency”

eighteen years of my life. I can let it go. Why do you keep hurting me with

The group of students stopped to watch the **drama** unfold

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Willow reached for Eliana’s arm, and as Eliana stood up, Willow fell to the ground. “Ouch! Eliana, why did you push me?”

Eliana looked at her coldly.

The onlookers rushed

over. “Eliana, that’s too much! Posting rumors online is illegal, you know!”

Eliana glanced at them as if they were a bunch of fools. In her previous life, she might have been anxious and tried to explain, but not this time.

She had no time for their nonsense.

The lunch break was short, and she needed rest to stay strong for the afternoon training. Without a word, she turned and walked away.

Her indifference only fueled the crowd’s anger.

“What kind of person is she? What a liar!” a student commented

Willow, are you okay? Don't worry. We believe in you. Eliana must have posted that on the forum. How shameless!” someone exclaimed. “She's just jealous that you're the real heiress and took away her life of luxury. That's why she targets you. **It's** disgusting, and then added.

After Eliana left, she returned to her tent to rest. As soon as she stepped inside, she heard someone crying.

Following the sound, Eliana found Stella, whose face was covered with rashes that no amount of foundation could hide, and sweating only made it look worse. Stella sat on her bed, sobbing.

Stella's face reminded Eliana of her own past experience when she reacted to the sunscreen from Willow. Stella's condition seemed even worse. Eliana had learned not **to** wear makeup during her reaction, which helped her recover more quickly.

Stella, however, continued using makeup, risking scars and permanent damage

Understanding how important appearance was to a woman, Eliana felt Stella's despair.

After some thought, she approached Stella and said, “Stella, stop **using** makeup. I'll give you a remedy. Get the ointment and apply it.”

Stella, her eyes red from crying, looked at Eliana, covering her face with her hands. “What did you **say**?”

Eliana picked up the sunscreen from Stella's makeup bag and said firmly, “Stop using this.”

Stella **sat** up abruptly. “What do you mean?”

Eliana replied, “If you trust me, stop using it **and** get the ointment. If not, **forget** it”

Stella had suspected that Willow's sunscreen might be causing her **rash** but wasn't sure,

Hearing Eliana's **words**, Stella paused, realizing something. “**Eliana**, now I know you weren't looking down **on** me before. You were warning me not to **use** Willow's sunscreen, right?”

Eliana remained silent and searched for a picture of the ointment on her phone. “Use this ointment and **avoid** spicy food. You'll be fine **in** six

Stella had been mocked for her ruined face and had to use heavy foundation daily, which only **made** it worse. She never expected Eliana to help

More tears streamed down Stella's face. "Thank you... **Thank** you so much...

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Elans felt a headache coming on from Stella's crying. She turned back to her bed and said, "I need to rest. If you're going to

1. rs. please do it outside"

The forum incident had made Willow quite "famous" among the freshmen

To mend her reputation, she cleverly arranged for ten roasted limbs to be brought up the mountain for everyone to enjoy.

Willow's ability to **fake** a medical report showed she had connections with the school authorities.

The offer, tempted by the delicious lamb, chose to ignore it.

That evening everyone gathered to feast on the lamb, except for Stella and Eliana.

Stella was tempted but followed Eliana's advice to apply ointment and avoid spicy food.

Eliana sat nearby, eating her own simple meal.

Stella joined her and whispered, "She must be trying to cause me trouble, serving roasted lamb when I have an allergy

"Eliana, I got the ointment you mentioned. After two days, the redness is fading. It's effective and cheap. How did you know about it

"Oh, I have some jelly. Do you want some?"

Stella chatted away, sitting next to Eliana, who mostly ignored her.

Stella initially thought Eliana was just pretending to be aloof, but over time, she realized Eliana simply didn't talk much, though Eliana was kind.



Since only Eliana and Stella didn't eat Willow's lamb, the next day, people gossiped about Stella behind her back.

"She looks so weird with that scary face," someone mocked.

"Yeah, I hope it's not contagious, I don't want to hang out with her. A student sneered.

She can only **hang out** with Eliana, who's also a weirdo. They deserve each other. Any way, Stella's face is ruined, another chimed in

Willow despised Stella the most but didn't **want** Eliana to have any friends. She wanted Eliana to be completely isolated.

A few days **later**, Willow brought some high-end skincare products to Stella, trying to win her over again. "Stella, these skincare products are great for your face. They'll help with your rash."

Stella was applying ointment when she saw what Willow brought. She was furious.

"Willow Garcia, what do you take me **for**? Your servant or something? If you don't want these, **throw** them in the trash. Do I look like your garbage disposal!" she said.

Willow was taken aback and felt a surge of anger, but with others in the tent, she had to hold it in.

Stella, you've got it wrong. I haven't used these products. Just look at what you're using—it's so cheap. The ones I'm offering you are luxury skincare items worth over 7000 dollars!" Willow stressed the price to show off her "kindness and generosity."

People around turned to look at them.

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She rolled her eyes at Willow's remark about her ointment. Are you out of your mind: My ointment is way better than

Take your stuff and get lost."

!!!

Willow tried to keep her cool. "Stella, maybe there's a misunderstanding"

Stella responded. "There's no misunderstanding at all I just don't want to be around someone like you."

Initially Stella had been misled by Willow into thinking Eliana was a malicious impostor.

But after spending a week with Eliana, she realized Eliana was genuinely nice, far better than Willow, who was a vicious

Just then, Eliana walked by with **her** hat **Stella** quickly ran after her, looking like a **fangirl**. "Eliana, wait for me. Let's **go** together

clear Stella had completely warmed up to Eliana.

Willow stood there with her skincare products, looking grim.

That makes sense. They are just two pathetic bitches, Willow thought.

It seemed pointless to waste time on Stella, who wouldn't achieve anything significant and wouldn't be of any help to her.

Stella would only end up as a drama teacher at Isonstead University after graduation.

Willow was focused on connecting with people who would achieve great things and could help her career. Building a network was crucial for her future success.

Stella and Eliana left the tent together.

Stella started chatting away. "Who does Willow **think** she is? She must **have some** dirty tricks. My face just started to heal, and using her skincare products might mess it up again."

Eliana glanced at her. "Your face does look much better."

Stella's eyes brightened. "Really? Do **you think** so? I thought I was just imagining it. Thanks a lot, Eliana

They walked to the gathering point together. Soon, the whole group **had** assembled.

The head officer announced that the training session was almost over, and it was time to form teams for a night hike with backpacks. The top ten teams to finish would receive special awards from the school.

Everyone groaned at the news, but the officer's stern look quickly silenced them.

Teams could be formed freely, with the remaining individuals assigned by the officer.

The top ten teams **would win** a 15–**thousand**–dollar school reward and single dorm rooms, which was a big incentive.

Not everyone could easily come up with 15 thousand dollars, and single dorm **rooms** were even more enticing.

At Lionstead University, living in a single dorm room meant one was either rich or well–connected, offering a significant networking boost

When it was time to form teams, everyone looked at Eliana, known as the strongest in the class. But since they had previously isolated her, approaching her now felt awkward.

Stella stepped up to Eliana. “Eliana, let’s team up!”

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Eliana nodded. ‘Okay’

With two spots left in their four–person **team**, the other girls hesitated briefly before rushing to invite Eliana to team up.

From a distance, Willow watched them with disdain. She rolled her eyes at their eagerness. All that fuss over 15 thousand dollars? Seriously? A bunch of hobos!” she thought.

As for the single dorm room, Willow had already secured one through connections.

She didn’t need it but saw it as a way to expand her network. She didn’t care about making the top ten at all.

But Eliana, having left the Garcia family, probably needed the 15 thousand dollars.

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Eliana didn’t need a teammate, but she let Stella tag along without objection.

Others, however, weren’t so lucky

Unmoved by their invitations, Eliana remained on her own

Soon enough, whispers circulated, branding her as “The Bitter, Broke Girl Who Thinks She’s Better Than **Everyone**.”

Standing beside her, Stella glanced around before whispering. “Thana, do you think we’ll actually rank in this? Don’t worry. I’ve been training hard. I won’t be **dead** weight this time!”

Stella hadn’t been the most diligent in training before, often finding ways to slark off.

But she found herself influenced by Eliana, so she began working hard in each daily **session**. As a result, Stella’s physical stamina **was** actually pretty good.

Eliana gave a faint nod. “Just do your best,” she replied, her voice steady.

Money and housing weren’t motivating Eliana.

She could easily have skipped the entire training if she wanted to. But she chose not to **stand** out.

She was here to relive the path she’d missed last time, taking in the views she missed.

Nearby, Willow let slip that she already had a single dorm room assigned, prompting an envious outcry.

private room?

“Oh, Willow! You’ve already got a private room? That’s amazing! One of the girls **gushed**.”

Covering her face shyly, Willow said, “It’s not a big deal! My parents just wanted to make sure I **was** comfortable. But I’m really looking forward to spending time with all of you!”

With that, admiration blossomed around her, and Willow basked in the attention with a delighted smile.

As free grouping time ended, they lined up again.

The head instructor stepped forward, announcing. “Tonight, we’ve brought in the record — holding team from last year’s endurance climb to cheer you on. **Give** them a warm welcome!”

Four men in casual attire walked onto the stage. Leading the group was Cameron in a sleek black jacket, standing out under the blazing sun.

The crowd erupted into applause, admiring the four with awe

A girl leaned in, excited. “**Oh** my gosh! They’re so handsome!”

Another girl chimed in, gesturing animatedly. “**It’s** Cameron! Cameron Wright”

A **third** girl chuckled, crossing her arms as she joined the convention. The campus legends! Cameron, Adam, Thomas, and Landon! I had no idea they set the record!”

Most of the freshmen had heard of their names

Among the group, there were students from many different departments.

The four of them were well-known. And the leader, **Cameron** was often referred to as the “campus heartthrob at Iso nstead University. His fame rivaled that of Roman, and their names were frequently mentioned in the same breath.

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Eliana stood silently.

watching Cameron from a d

a distance.

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Their eyes met briefly, catching her off guard, and she blinked, feeling her pulse stutter.

When she refocused, he **had** already looked away, his attention now on the crowd, sharing his experience from last year.

His voice had a warm, summery cadence—like a glass of chilled lemonade on a hot day.

She shifted her gaze **toward** Thomas,

Cameron’s presence somehow dimmed the aura of the other there, making them appear almost as **his** supporting cast, though each of them was outstanding.

Some people are just born for the spotlight, Eliana thought, clapping with the crowd.

After the speeches, the instructor assigned **two** additional girls to Eliana's **group**.

They were surprised but pretended to be disappointed.

"Oh, great one grumbled. I didn't want to team up with her anyway! Can we switch groups?"

The instructor's tone was stern. "You think you can pick and choose? Go take it up with the head instructor."

Stella rolled her eyes. "Drama queens.

"Excuse me, Stella?" one of them snapped. "You want to fight?"

Stella gave them a sly smile. "Did I say anything about you? If you think it's about you, that's your problem."

Unfazed. Eliana began packing her **backpack**.

She crouched down, checking her supplies, when she noticed a pair of polished, expensive shoes in front of her. Looking up, she met Cameron's cool, smiling gaze.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, raising an eyebrow.

Thomas and his groups joined them with a laugh. "Don't forget we promised to come see you, Eliana

Eliana sighed, glancing at them. "You didn't have to make a scene

Thomas lifted his fist playfully. "Hey, we're here to cheer you on

Grinning, she fist-bumped **him**. "Fine. I'll give it my best."

Adam and Landon stepped up for fist bumps, too, each encouraging her in their own way.

Cameron, however, packed up her **hat**, which had fallen, and placed it back on her head—adjusting the brim.

His voice was low **and** steady. "It'll be **exhausting**, but we'll be waiting at the finish **line**."

Eliana looked up and met his gaze.

Eliana blinked, feeling a brief but undeniable flutter, "Right. **Got**

When the four left, the spectators around them began to murmur excitedly.

Stella sidled up to Eliana, whispering, "I didn't know you were so close to them."

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Just friends. Eliana replied **casually**

But the girls nearby were jealous. "Oh, please," one of them scoffed loudly. "I thought someone here was **close** with them. Guess I was wrong! Meanwhile, Willow's the real deal—she even got a mosquito repellent from Roman!"

Stella fired **back**. "Mind your own business!"

The mosquito repellent was originally a gift from Roman to Eliana.

But Willow took it from Eliana and distorted the truth.

Willow knew exactly who the repellent had originally been from.

But there was no way she would admit that as she watched the scene unfold from behind the crowd.

Willow hadn't expected Eliana to get close to Cameron and the others, especially to the point of becoming part of their inner circle. It **was** a shock to her.

'But it doesn't matter. Someone like Cameron will never look twice at a girl with no background like Eliana, she thought.

Rumor had it that Landon was the one who went through girlfriends the fastest. It wouldn't surprise Willow if Eliana had just

hooked up with Landon, becoming his latest fling.

That has to be the case, she thought.

"Later that night, at nine o'clock, the students began the grueling mountain endurance test.

As they entered the mountain's dense woods, darkness swallowed the group, each team disappearing along the trail.

Though the path was marked to prevent anyone from straying too far, the wilderness was vast, and it was easy to get disoriented.

Each recruit wore a GPS tracker for safety, and the challenge was clear: any team failing to finish by sunrise would be marked **as** unsuccessful.

Eliana **forged** ahead with confidence, navigating like she already knew the way.

Stella followed close behind, trying to keep up.

Not long after, the **two** remaining girls were already huffing in **exhaustion**.

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Tim done! I need a break—I **can't walk** anymore! Livia Sinclair declared, plopping down on the **trail**.

Selene Lancaster, collapsing beside her, groaned. "Same here! We've been training all day. I'm exhausted. It's not like I care about the prize money or that single dorm room. Maybe we should just give up."

Stella Mun around, irritation flashing in her eyes. "**Are** you serious? We're a team of four! If you slack off, you'll drag all of us.

down!"

Livia shrugged indifferently. "So! Not my problem if you all suffer for it."

Selene smirked. "Exactly. Blame the instructors who teamed you up with us. Not like we **chose** this.

They exchanged a conspiratorial glance, knowing full well they'd **planned** this to sabotage Eliana,

Before the assessment began, Willow had approached them under the guise of "family loyalty" "We can't let Eliana place too high," Willow **had** whispered. "If she doesn't score well, she'll have to come back to the Garcia family, which is what **my** parents all want

Selene and Livia were convinced.

Willow's offer had included a handsome reward: fifteen thousand dollars each, enough for Livia and Selene to readily **accept**.



They didn't need to place in the competition to earn the money, and on top of that, they could easily score some goodwill with Willow. It was a **win-win** situation, and they were more than happy to take advantage of it

Now, barely into the hike, they were dragging their feet, determined to slow Eliana down

Eliana knew the fastest route across the mountain

If everyone stayed on pace, they'd have a **fair** shot at placing in the top five.

But with Livia and Selene dragging them down, finishing without ranking last would be a miracle.

Eliana, however, was keenly aware of the situation. She guessed it was Wollow's plan.

Stella tried **again**, exasperated. "What will it take for you two to keep moving? The prize money of fifteen thousand dollars isn't tempting?"

Livia and Selene rolled their eyes, ignoring Stella.

"Yeah, not tempting at all. I can just sit here and still get **paid**, they **thought**."

Ignoring Stella's frustration, Eliana abruptly stepped forward and ripped the shoulder patches off Livia and Selene's uniforms.

The two girls sprang to their feet, glaring at Eliana. "What do you think you're doing. Eliana?" Livia shouted,

Eliana held up the patches, her voice calm. "These patches have CPS trackers. Without them, you'll be on your own out here, If you get lost in the woods, no one will find you."

Her tone sharpened as she turned to leave. "The **mountain's** big, and there may still be wild animals lurking around. Stay if you want—but Stella and I are moving on

Stella eagerly followed her lead. "I'm with you!"

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As they **walked** away, Livia and Selene exchanged uneasy glances, shadows flickering across their faces. A shiver crept down their spines as Eliana's warning sank in

“Wait! Don’t leave us they called, now scrambling to catch up, fatigue apparently forgotten.

Stella couldn’t hide her amusement as they continued down the trail. “Elana, that was brilliant! But how did you know the GPS was in their shoulder patches?”

Elana shrugged nonchalantly “I guessed”

In her previous life, after the assessment, the instructors had collected each patch. It was enough for Elana to deduce the trackers location.

Livia and Selene wouldn’t risk gambling on their safety, so they had no choice but to follow.

For the next hour, Elana led the group without a word, conserving her energy.

Livia and Selene, meanwhile, kept attempting to slow the pace, though Elana, with the patches securely in her hand, held

They had no option but to keep up.

The dense forest stretched endlessly, with towering trees that blocked out the moonlight, casting everything in shadow.

Falling behind even for a moment meant being left behind completely. Elana wasn’t the type to wait for anyone.

After an hour of relentless running, she **didn’t** show any sign of slowing down.

Finally, Livia huffed in frustration. “Are we even on the right path? We’ve been walking forever, and nothing’s changed: You better not be leading us **in** circles.”

Stella, though exhausted, shot back. “You’re free to leave. Elana didn’t ask you to tag along

Livia scoffed. “Well, she’s got our patches! You think we actually want to be here?”

Selene chimed in, her voice sharp. “Yeah, she’s probably **lost** and just dragging us along!”

Elana took a long drink from her canteen and then **tossed** the patches **back** to them. “Here. You’re welcome to go your own way

Livia and Selene’s eyes brightened as they retrieved their patches—until **Elana spoke** again.

“One thing, though. We’ve strayed off the original mountain path. So if you decide to turn back, good luck finding your **way**. Or, you can just wait here until morning for the instructors to find you assuming the wolves don’t get to you first,” Eliana said casually

Selene paled “Wolves? Are we off the path And you want us to just turn **around**? I can’t remember the way back!”

Livia rounded on her. “You’ve led us straight into a trap, haven’t you? You’re bad luck, Eliana!”

In her previous life, Eliana had studied the mountain routes thoroughly.

Then, no one trusted her **directions**, and she’d been forced to follow the group, wandering for hours until dawn.

As a result, she missed out on both the **cash** prize and the opportunity for a single dorm room.

Not this time. She planned to break the record, not for the prize, but for her own resolve.

“Eliana, you seriously have no idea where you’re going, do you? Selene shouted, her voice filled with frustration. “Are you

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trying to get us all killed?”

She gazed back at Livia and Selene with a serene, unwavering look. “I’ve given you **your** patches. Whether you stay or leave is up to you.

Without waiting for their answer, Eliana turned and strode into the shadows of the forest, Stella keeping pace beside her.

Fumbling with their gear, Livia and Selene hurriedly fell in line, their earlier bravado replaced by palpable fear.

They didn't dare stray too far behind now—  
not with the fear of wolves haunting their every step.

The promises they had made  
to Willow earlier seemed like distant memories. Right now, survival was the only thing that  
mattered

## Chapter 26

They been ining Ste another forty minutes.

Eliana kished at the top of a small hit wanting to the distance & fag perked through the trees ahead

Reint wasbed over her as she recognized the fishes

Finally” Stella groaned into the ground and rubbing her sore calves

sinking

mix beade them beard a faint, high-pitched bowl from behind

Shearound and raped spora fly creature peeking out from the brush

Linsa's eyes sparkled “A poppy”

Unbeknownst to be the small creature wasn't a playl

was a wolf cub. curiously observing her from the

Without besitation, she reached out offering crumbs and some and within seconds, the  
small creature trotted into

be on

Asher, anxious bark drew las amen “What's that sound she called out.

Stells glanced over her shoulder sared to see Livia attempting to tuck the linle animal into  
her backpack “Livia' What are you doing?

Lieva looked up a bit sheepish There was this abandoned pup back there. Poor thing must've  
been left behind. I figured Id

Elna famed her patience visibly thinning. Are you out of your mind: That's no puppy! That's  
a wolf pup! I told you guys already—here are wild wolves in this forest

Elana had been cautious the entire trek scanning for any signs of wolves

Mouse Saber was known for its occasional wolf sightings, though such encounters were rare since the area was regularly

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But it was now clear that Eliana hadn't accounted for Livia's unpredictability.

She had actually mistaken a wolf cub for a puppy

Any dog catching the scent of a wolf, would never dare to step into wolf territory

"What Livia's eye faltered, and the wolf pup slipped from her arms, hitting the ground with a soft whine.

Elana snatched up her bag her urgency unmistakable. "We need to move. Now."

mother wolf would catch their scent and be there in no time.

The theme of them sprang to their feet, falling in line behind Eliana

Pelind them the little wolf pup howled twice, its short legs working to catch up with the group.

"Stella panted, glancing back in alarm. It's following **us** What do we do

Chapter 26

Elana's brow furrowed a distant howl shattered the forest's silence. Her heart dropped. "Faster. Go, now!" she snapped, her voice laced with urgency.

As they picked up speed, Selene let out a loud grumble. "Seriously. Livia, what were you thinking? You've put us all at risk!"

It's not my fault Livia protested, wringing her hands. "It looked like a dog, okay? And besides, Eliana led us down **this path!** If she hadn't, we wouldn't have even run into it!"

Stella threw Livia a steely **glare**. "You can't tell the difference between a wolf and a dog, and you're blaming Eliana?"

Livia continued, "L"

"Alright, that's enough" Eliana interjected sharply, not breaking stride. Just keep moving. We're **almost** at the finish **line**. Once we're there, we'll be safe"

Being surrounded by a wolf pack was dangerous.

Eliana might be able to ensure her own safety, but there was no way she could **guarantee** the safety of the three burdens tagging along.

The three of them fell silent, fear etched on their faces, and hurried to keep up with Eliana, adrenaline pushing them

forward

What should've been a twenty-minute sprint took them barely ten, each heartbeat pounding louder than the last.

At last, they stumbled into the finish area, collapsing onto nearby benches in exhaustion

An instructor waiting at the che

-a new record"

at the checkpoint clicked his stopwatch in amazement. "Incredible! Two hours and seventeen minutes

"What were you doing coming from that direction?" he asked, offering them water.

Selene and **Livia** were about to launch into a story and blame Eliana when they realized they were the winner. "We are the Winner?" they said, stunned.

The instructor explained, "Not only did you place first, but you broke the record!"

Selene and Livia's eyes widened. "We did? We broke the record? They spoke in unison, their voices bursting with excitement as they jumped up and down in place.

Oh my gosh! If I remember right, breaking the record comes with extra rewards, doesn't it? They'll add more money to the original prize! Selene exclaimed

The instructor nodded. "That's right. You'll receive 20 thousand dollars and a single-room dorm for each of you."

"Oh my gosh!" Livia and Selene screamed, their joy echoing in the air.

Stella, more restrained but equally thrilled, turned to Eliana. "all thanks to you, Eliana. We wouldn't have made it this fast without you

Eliana managed a small smile, settling down to catch her breath

Achill crept down her spine, **thinking** of the wolves. If they'd been caught, no prize would've mattered.

Just as she allowed herself to relax, she felt a tug at her foot

Looking down, she froze

There, looking up with gleaming eyes, was the very wolf pup they'd been running from.

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12:03 Mon, Dec 2

Chapter 26

It **had** somehow managed to keep up, trailing her scent the whole way.

"Oh, ta..." she muttered.

The wolf pup let out a howl.

"What's that noise?" one of the instructors asked, glancing over.

Thinking quickly. Stella interrupted. **Just** a sound effect on **my** phone, sir!"

The instructor chuckled, seemingly convinced. "For a moment there, I thought it was a real **wolf**. But no need to worry; the trails are regularly patrolled

Wolves avoided human contact—unless, of course, they were provoked or hungry.

Tonight, with so many people crossing the mountains at once, the wild wolves would be even less likely to provoke a group.

Unless of course, someone as reckless as **Livia** were to draw attention to herself and antagonize them.

Distracted by the prize, Selene and Livia were oblivious to the wolf pup.

Eliana, however, shot it a stern look, lifting it by the scruff of its neck. She had one hand gently squeezing its muzzle, preventing it from making a sound.

"Listen here." she whispered, "no more howling, got it? Or I'll be forced to kill you."

The wolf pup let out a soft whimper, its eyes wide and pleading

Eliana couldn't tell if it was lost or abandoned, but one thing was clear. It couldn't be discovered by the instructor.

Moving quietly, Eliana slipped to the side and dropped the wolf pup into the tall grass. "Go on. Back to the wild"

But the pup, determined and persistent, latched onto her shoe, gnawing at the fabric.

At that moment, the instructor turned and began walking toward Eliana.

"Eliana," he said, eyes narrowing, "what are you doing over there?"

Quickly, she slid the wolf pup behind her **back**. "Just catching my breath, sir.

Stella seized the chance to distract him. "Sir, can I see the stopwatch? What **was** our exact time?"

"Oh, of course," he replied, turning away.

For a moment, Stella's eyes met **Eliana's**, and they **shared** a knowing look. It was as if Stella had already guessed **what** Eliana **was** trying to hide.

Eliana had tried several times to get rid of the wolf pup, but it was **as** persistent as a stubborn burr. No matter how far she tossed it into the undergrowth, the little creature would trail **back**, following her scent like a loyal puppy.

Frustrated and out of options, Eliana finally gave in. With a resigned sigh, she unzipped her backpack, tucked the wolf pup inside, and handed it a chunk of canned luncheon meat. At least for now, she'd have to keep it hidden—and hope it didn't **cause** more trouble.

## Chapter 27

The top-ranking teams were announced at dawn, and unsurprisingly, Eliana's squad came in first.

Standing on the platform, the four team members held their salutes while the head instructor addressed the assembled squads.

With a proud announcement, he recognized Eliana's squad as the champions and noted that they had even broken Cameron's three-year record, setting a new milestone at Isonsten University.

Eliana kept a neutral expression, but Selene and Livia, grinned with excitement, their previous apathy long forgotten.



As **the squads disbanded**, **everyone** returned to their tents for one final night.

Tomorrow, after an afternoon assembly, they would be free at last.

While packing her bag, someone bumped into Eliana's **backpack** jostling it to the ground. She scowled, pushing him away as she grabbed her bag and walked off.

From behind, she heard him mutter. "What's her problem

Eliana shot him a fierce glare. He immediately fell silent, not daring to utter another word

Stella quickly fell into step beside her, snapping, "No, what's your problem? You and your whole family!

"Wait up, Eliana!" Stella called.

**Back** in the tent, Eliana unzipped her **backpack**, only to discover a **small** wolf cub curled up fast asleep inside.

It had polished off the last of the lunch meat she'd left in there.

"You actually brought it **back**?" Stella asked, wide-eyed.

Eliana shrugged. "I tried to leave it, but it kept following me."

"Maybe it was abandoned by its mother? Stella mused. "This little guy seems to have imprinted on you. Life with you would be easier **than** scavenging in the wild.

But... are you really **going** to keep it? It's a wild wolf, Eliana. Even if it's small now, it could get dangerous as it grows."

**Eliana** paused, then shook her head. "I'm not **planning** on adopting it. I'll release it somewhere when we get back.

Closing her bag, she lay down, shutting her eyes, and willed herself to sleep.

When **Willow** found out that Eliana's squad not only avoided being a burden but actually set a new record, she stormed over to Selene and Livia.

"What happened? Weren't you supposed to slow her down? How on earth did you still come in first?" she accused.

Selene and Livia exchanged innocent glances before **Livia** replied, "Willow, sure, we agreed to help, but it's not like we had co

ntrol over everything. **Eliana** knew a shortcut, and she even took our badges and threatened to leave us behind if we didn't keep up

gaze hardened, her irritation bubbling to the surface. You couldn't have ignored her? If you didn't keep up, her

12:03 Mon, Dec 2 C.

Chapter 27

rank wouldn't have counted

Livia stared at her in disbelief "You're asking us to risk our lives for this? For the small favors you gave us? No **way!** We're not putting ourselves in danger just to help you out

Yeah Selene added, frowning. I didn't expect you to go that far, Willow. This is way too much."

Realizing her anger had gotten the better of **her**. Willow quickly backpedaled. "No, that's not what I meant

But Selene and Livia were already **walking** away.

With training over and the rewards for first place secured, there was no longer any reason to appease Willow.

The next morning, word of Eliana's victory spread quickly.

Cameron **and** his friends, **who** had held the previous record, joked about it in their group chat.

Landon Wow! Eliana broke our record! Nicely done!

Adam: [And here **we were**, worried she wouldn't make it. Turns out she's been holding out on us!]

Thomas: [Awesome, Eliana! You'll have to treat us to dinner!]

Landon: But seriously, if Tommy hadn't slowed us down back then, our record would've been 20 minutes faster!]

Thomas [Excuse me? Are you blaming me? You want to settle this?]

Adam: [Oh, and remember who nearly wet their pants when they **saw** a wolf pack?]

Thomas: [I'm out. This group doesn't appreciate me!]

Eliana saw the messages and called them on the ride back to Isonstead University.

The whole group picked up immediately—  
Cameron, surprisingly, was the first to answer the call.

“Did you guys really run into wolves too? Eliana asked.

“Did **you**?” Cameron replied, sounding surprised.

Thomas quickly chimed in, “Eliana, are you **okay**? You didn’t get hurt, did you?”

“No way, Landon interjected, “if she had, we’d have heard about it by **now**.”

Adam laughed. “You must be really lucky or really unlucky, Eliana. They usually make sure wolves are nowhere near the area during training

As Eliana listened, her laag wriggled slightly, and she glanced down to **see** a pair of shiny eyes peeking out through the

Let’s talk more when I get to campus,” she said.

They sensed something unusual and agreed.

After the bus arrived at Isonstead University, Livia **and** Selene rushed off eagerly to claim their rewards.

Eliana encouraged Stella to go with them, while she slung her bag over her shoulder and **headed** in the opposite direction.

2/4

12:03 Mon, Dec 2 G

Chapter 27

She found Cameron and the others waiting in a quiet spot under the trees.

Thomas rushed over as she approached. ‘**Eliana**, let me have a look—are you sure you’re not hurt?’”

“I’m fine,” she reassured him. “But I do want to show you something

Setting her bag on the ground, she unzipped it, and the others leaned in curiously.

A second later—

Thomas's eyes went wide. "No way!" he exclaimed, his tone a **mix** of shock and **awe**.

Landon's jaw dropped as he pointed to the **small** creature. "Did you.. bring a **wolf** cub back with you?" he asked, incredulous.

Adam burst out laughing, clapping his hands. "**You** are amazing!

Eliana sighed. "It's not like I planned it. It just kept following me

Cameron picked up the squirming cub, which immediately started growling, and tried to nip at **his** hand.

Cameron's large hand clamped down over the wolf cub's muzzle, leaving **the** little creature powerless to struggle. Its tail was tucked between its legs, and it gave Eliana a pitiful, pleading look

Adam chuckled. "Seems like it thinks you're its mom. **Eliana.**"

Eliana blinked

Thomas scratched his chin thoughtfully. "Wouldn't be surprised if this little **guy's** dad was one of the wolves that gave us trouble back then.

Realization dawned on Eliana—

Cameron **and** his friends **had** taken the same shortcut in their own training years ago.

They'd run into an entire **wolf** pack, costing them a good twenty minutes.

Fortunately for Eliana, she had only encountered one cub.

Cameron threw the cub back to her. "So, **what's** your plan?"

Eliana groaned. I tried leaving it behind, but it kept sniffing me out. Maybe I'll find a safe place in the wild and release it

there"

Landon shook his head. "It's so young. **Eliana.** It wouldn't survive

"Exactly." Thomas agreed. "It's probably still nursing.

Eliana sighed. "Should I try taking it back to its mother?"

Cameron shook his head. "**Now that** it's been **around** humans, the **pack** would likely reject it."

Adam grinned. It **likes** you. You might as well keep it, Eliana. Seems like God brought you two together.

Eliana stared at him. "You want me to keep it?"

## Chapter 28

Cameron smirked, crossing his arms. "Who else would take care of it if not you?"

The wolf pup, seemingly fragile, only behaved when it was near Eliana. Although it wasn't strong enough to be dangerous yet, anyone else who tried to pick it up faced fierce resistance.

The pup whined pitifully, each cry sounding more desperate than the last as if someone were trying to kill it.

Eliana decided Eliana was its mother;

Eliana frowned and shook her **head**. "I don't know how to take care of it.

Just treat it like a dog." Cameron suggested with a grin. "Most people **have** dogs, you'll have a wolf. Way cooler."

Thomas chimed in shrugging. If it gets too wild when it's older, we can always release it into the wild. Worst case, it can go

Keeping the **wolf** as a pet **wasn't** completely unreasonable—the Davis family certainly had the resources to handle it

After a moment of consideration, they decided that was the best course of action for now.

Eliana carefully placed the little wolf back into her bag and said, "Alright, I need to go. I have an award to collect."

Thomas laughed. "Almost forgot—our **new** military training record holder at Isonstead University is standing right in **front** of us. We should celebrate with dinner later!"

Eliana waved them off with a smile. "Sure, sure, we'll see about that."

The prize money, twenty thousand dollars, was transferred to Eliana's account. It stirred something deep inside her.

This time around, she wouldn't have to worry about money.

In her previous life, not long after she had started university, Andy and Victoria cut off her funds at Willow's urging Willow claimed that Eliana **was** bullying her at school, and Andy and Victoria punished Eliana by freezing her account

Despite all of Eliana's explanations, they refused to listen, choosing to trust Willow instead.

Back then, she had believed it **was** all a misunderstanding and had even tried to win Willow over, but her efforts had been in

vain

The prize money had been her lifeline, a desperate attempt to secure funds for living expenses.

No money, and a ruined face—  
Eliana's situation in her previous life had been nothing short of a nightmare.

Winning the prize money now **was** a promising **start**, a chance to do things right.

Returning home with the wolf pup in her bag, Eliana was greeted with stunned expressions from Lucy and Sebastian.

"You went off for training and came back with a wolf? Are you sure about raising it?" Lucy asked, her eyes wide.

Eliana propped her chin in her hand, looking thoughtful. "Mom Jet's **give it** a shot. They say you can raise a wolf like a dog. How different can it be?"

Sebastian seemed intrigued, his gaze settling on the small creature. Like many men, he had a fascination with predators. "What kind of wolf is **in**?"

|||

1203 Mon, Dec

Chapter 28.

"No idea, Dad Eliana admitted.

Sebastian nodded, considering "Alright, if you've decided to keep it, we'll do it right. First, let's get it checked out—make sure it's healthy and figure out its breed"

Lucy also nodded in agreement.

Naomi was sitting nearby with a gentle smile. "If we're keeping then it needs a name. Eliana, why don't you choose one?"

Eliana thought for a moment, then grabbed a few snacks from the table and placed them in front of the pup. "Whichever one it goes for, that'll be its name."

The pup smelted around before settling by a can of hunch **meat**, letting out an excited yip

"Alright then. Lunchie' it is Eliana declared.

The name was too **casual**, but since Eliana had brought the wolf home,

it **was**

hers to name

Lucy smiled and pulled out a gift box, her eyes warm. "Eliana, I heard you set a new record during the military training. **Your** dad and I have a gift for you"

Eliana's eyes lit up with surprise. "Wow, the school already gave the prize money, and now you're giving me a present

Sebastian chuckled, nodding at the box. "Go on, open it. See if you like it."

Inside the box, Eliana found an unlimited credit card and transfer of ownership documents for **shares** in a local ski resort

"A ski resort?" Eliana **asked, blinking** in shock

Sebastian nodded, his voice full of affection. "It's your own private ski resort now. You can take your friends there whenever

you want."

No matter what the gift had been, Eliana would have appreciated it.

But she hadn't expected something so generous.

And they had picked something she truly loved—skiing—even though she had never mentioned it. Her parents **must** have done their homework.

"Thank you, Mom and Dad," **she said** softly, hugging both Lucy and Sebastian.

"Our biggest wish is for **you** to always be happy" Lucy said, squeezing her daughter gently.

The next day. Lunchie was taken for a full check-up. It put up a furious struggle, howling loudly enough to wake the dead.

In the end. Eliana had to accompany it the entire time,

The results showed that aside from being a little underweight, Lunchie was in perfect health

**sa**

After a thorough analysis, the vet confirmed it was a Kenai Peninsula wolf.

Once fully grown, it would reach six feet in length and weigh over 200 pounds—a true giant.

Eliana stared at the tiny pup, now curled in her lap, wondering how something so small could grow into a 200-pound beast.

Well, for now, she'd keep it.

2/3

12:04 Mon. Dec

Chapter 28

Back home, Lunchie ate its fill, the little belly round, and fell asleep sprawled across the carpet.

Eliana settled on her bed, opened **her laptop**, and logged onto the dark web.

The deadline for her latest challenge had **passed**, and none of the **hackers** who had signed up had managed to breach her firewall

In fact, not only **had** they failed, but they had also left traces of their attempts.

Eliana followed the trail **and** quickly located the IP address of “Red Riding Hood

To her surprise, it wasn't just any random location—it **was** right there in Dratora City, at Isonstead University.

Her fingers **flew** across the keyboard as she hacked into Red Riding Hood's computer, creating a new folder with a simple message: [Hello, friend.]

She then erased her tracks, planning to check in **again** later.



Eliana had promised Cameron and the others dinner, so she headed out to meet them.

When she arrived at the restaurant, the group **had** already **ordered** and was waiting.

“Finally! I’m starving. Thomas complained as soon as Eliana sat down.

Don’t even ask,” she sighed, unzipping her bag. I had to bring it along—it wouldn’t stop howling the moment I left.”

A little head popped out of the bag. It was Lunchie, letting out a playful yip.

Cameron grinned and reached to grab the pup, who wriggled furiously in his hands. “So this little thing’s a Kenai Peninsula

wolf?

Eliana nodded. “Yeah.”

Landon shook his head in disbelief. “Hard to imagine

“Don’t underestimate it,” Eliana warned. “The vet **said** it could grow to over 200 pounds and six feet long.”

Adam chuckled. “Big enough.”

Eliana rolled her eyes. “We’ll see. If it turns out to be too wild, I’ll **have** to release it back.”

She returned Lunchie to her bag, securing it gently,

“**Classes** start soon,” Landon said, leaning forward. “Clubs are already recruiting. Are you sure you want to go through the **whole** process to join one? The tennis club already has nearly a hundred applicants.”

## Chapter 29

When the time came for the tennis club’s new promotional campaign, the number of people signing up would triple.

“Of course Eliatta responded with a small smile, feeling confident. Tve told you all before, I don’t take shortcuts.

Thomas sighed dramatically, shaking his head in mock disappointment. Oh, come on, Eliana! Landon never **makes** exceptions, but he’s willing to bend the rules for you, and you’re still refusing? That’s a failure—such a missed opportunity

Ehan just smiled and shrugged, keeping her plans to herself for now.

In her previous life, she had lost count of how many chances shipped through her fingers because others had pulled strings behind the scenes.

Now, even with a clear advantage, she refused to become the kind of person she once despised,

Landon leaned back, chuckling “No worries. Seeing how confident you are, Eliana, I’m starting to think you might be pretty impressive!

Eliana blinked playfully “Impressive! Hardly. I’m just getting started”

Thomas laughed. “Fine, fine! We’ll be looking forward to your performance, then.”

The five friends clinked their glasses, sharing jokes and laughter

The meal was supposed to be Eliana’s treat, but when she went to pay, she found out Cameron had already settled the bill.

She turned to him **with** a puzzled look. “How about I add you on WhatsApp and transfer the money?”

They were all part of the same group chat, but Cameron **and** Eliana weren’t direct contacts.

Cameron nodded, “Sure.”

She sent him a friend request, but he didn’t accept it right **away**

It wasn’t until Eliana was home, freshly showered and lying in bed, that she noticed he had accepted the request

Curious, she opened his profile **and** scrolled through **his** status updates.

Cameron rarely posted—his most recent was from last Christmas—a picture of a decorated Christmas tree at the Wright

Eliana transferred the money for dinner, adding a short message (Good night.)

After hitting send, she put her phone **away** and went to sleep.

The next morning, Eliana was back in class.

She left home amid the noise of Lurchie, howling pitifully as she departed

But taking it to school **wasn't** an option, so she shut the door behind her without a backward glance.

When she got in the car, she finally noticed that Cameron had responded to her message the night before.

It was just two words: [Good night. Yet, he hadn't accepted the money transfer.

12:04 Mon, Dec 2 G

Chapter 29

Eliana frowned.

He needn't have added her if he hadn't been going to accept the money,

At school, she took her usual seat in the back row

Stella joined her carrying her books. "Eliana, didn't you participate in the lottery for dorm rooms?"

"No. I didn't, Eliana replied.

The top ten students from the last evaluation had been awarded cash prizes and single dorm rooms, but those rooms: required a lottery to assign members.

60

Although Eliana had a spot **available**, she didn't plan to stay in a single dorm room, so she didn't bother entering the lottery

"That's too bad, Stella said, sounding disappointed. "I was hoping we'd be on the same floor. Aren't **you** staying in the

"No Eliana said simply

Stella's curiosity piqued. Then where are you staying? Did you rent a place?"

Eliana didn't feel like answering, but before she could change the topic, a group of Willow's followers joined the

Oh look at her pretending, one girl sneered. She's not a spoiled princess anymore, but she still acts like one."

Scoring first in the evaluations was pure luck, another added. "She got a single dorm and acts like it's beneath her. What a joke

“Yeah! Giving up such a good dorm room, she’s probably renting some run-down old place,” one snickered.

“She thinks she’s royalty without the title, another girl taunted. She’s copying Willow, but unlike her, Willow actually rents a fancy penthouse near campus, with a private concierge and everything. I bet Eliana’s in a crumbling old building somewhere!”

Eliana didn’t mention that she rented a place, but they still **made** up a story.

Their mocking didn’t faze Eliana. Before, she had ignored their gossip, not wanting to **waste** her energy during intense training.

But now that the boot camp was over, she didn’t feel the need to hold back

She waved a hand in front of her nose, pretending to be overwhelmed. “Something smells really bad here.”

Eliana’s gaze turned icy. “Didn’t you wipe your mouths after using the toilet?”

The group blinked, taken aback.

Their faces went **blank** before realization dawned, and they flushed with anger. “Who are you calling dirty? You’re the one

Whoever smells foul, Eliana shot back.

“You **think** you’re special just because you rented a **place**?” another girl snapped. “**You have** no right to show off!”

Eliana gave them a pitying look. “Did I ever say I was renting?”

“Oh, stop pretending a girl of the group jered. “You’re from Aragow, so if you’re not in the dorms, you must be renting!

12:04 Mon, Dec 2 G+

Chapter 29

I wouldn’t be surprint Wallows parents were funding your apartment. You stole her life for years. How can you be so shameless! I | were you. Id have jumped off a building already!!

|

“Yeah” someone chimed in “And Willow is still kind enough to you.”

It was clear Willow had done an excellent job brainwashing them.

Elana had enough. From her bag, she pulled out a black keycard.

Stella gasped. “any **that** a Cedar Manor access card?”

“W–What one of the girls stammered.

The

them.

leaned in to get a closer look. The unique black card with a silver logo was unmistakable—only residents had

This keycard is quite special. There isn’t another similar one available on the market.

Cedar Manor was where Willow lived, a luxury complex that cost a fortune to rent.

They couldn’t believe it—Eliana had a keycard for Cedar Manor

That meant she lived in the same complex as Willow, and her place **wasn’t** some run-down, shabby apartment.

Eliaria raised an eyebrow. “Well? Why aren’t you saying anything

They exchanged stunned glances.

Just because you have **a** keycard doesn’t mean anything,” someone muttered. “You probably got the rent money from Willow’s parents.

“Yeah, only someone like you, who doesn’t appreciate anything, would use Willow’s parents’ money to rent such a nice place, one of them said, their voice dripping with disdain

.

Stella finally lost patience and stood up. “Will you ever stop? First, you said Eliana lived **in a** dump. Now she has a Cedar Manor **card**, and you’re claiming Willow’s family is funding her Why do **you** care so much? Honestly, anyone would think you’re Willow’s pets!”

As she finished speaking, Willow herself walked into the classroom.

As soon as they saw **Willow** approaching, the others hurriedly motioned for her to expose Eliana’s lie.

Seeing the card in Eliana’s hand, her expression froze in disbelief.

She has a Cedar Manor card! Eliana can't possibly rent such an expensive apartment! Willow thought.

Willow knew better than anyone that **Eliana's** original card had been deactivated as **soon** as she left the Garcia household.

Chapter 30

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Willow's eyes glinted with suspicion as she watched the keycard. It's fake! That card has to be a knockoff, she thought, her lips curling in disdain.

She thought. Eliana doesn't have the money to rent a place in Cedar Manor. She's broke after leaving the Garcia family—a regular student at Isonstead University.

Cedar Manor is not just expensive—its residents are **at** least from the elite class!

Even the tenants are carefully selected by the property managers.

There's no **way** a real estate agent would sign a lease with her.

That card must be a fake—some cheap counterfeit.

She decided to play along, determined to expose what she saw as Eliana's deception.

Willow's voice dripped with false sweetness as **she** said, "Oh, Eliana, you live in Cedar Manor? That's strange—I've never seen you there before."

The property at Cedar Manor was **a** gift from Sebastian, just before the start of the semester.

He and Lucy had wanted Eliana to have a place to rest between classes—somewhere more comfortable than the dorms but not too far from campus,

So Sebastian just bought her a place instead.

The apartment was only a couple of streets away, a short drive from Isonstead University.

If Eliana ever tired, she could simply head back to the apartment for a quick nap and some rest.

It was never a rental; it had been transferred directly to Eliana's name.

The keycard Eliana held was genuine, but she had never had the chance to visit.

A group of Willow's friends snickered at Eliana their mocking laughter filling the air.

"Oh, that keycard must be a fake" one of them sneered

I bet she bought it online," another added. "Probably got it with one of those cheap fake s people use to show off "Yeah, you can't turn a commoner i

into a queen, no matter how hard you try!" a third said, rolling her eyes. Willow smiled b ehind her hand, enjoying the spectacle.

by sister

"Oh, don't say that she said with a feigned look of concern. "Sure, someone could fake a keycard, but I trust my wouldn't go that far. Let's not misunderstand her, **okay?**

"You're too kind, Willow, one of her friends gushed. "We all know Eliana couldn't possibl y afford a place in Cedar Manor. Only someone like you could manage it."

Willow hesitated, pretending to be conflicted, **and** then made an offer.

"Don't say that. She **is my** sister. Why don't we have a get-together at my place this weekend?"

"Sounds great!" they chorused, eager for a taste of luxury.

"I've only seen pictures of Cedar Manor online one of them said, eyes shining with antici pation. "I can't wait to see it in

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person

Willow's gare flickered over to Flana. Why don't you join us, Ellana?

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Willow was convinced that Eliana wasn't the owner of the Cedar Manor apartment. With that certainty in mind, she seized the opportunity to flaunt her own situation, all while ta king a sibile jab at Eliana.

She didn't wait for a response, cutting off any chance of refusal. Tr's settled then. See you this weekend!" She spun around and left, her entourage trailing behind her, giving Eliana no chance to back out.

Stella had watched the entire exchange, disgust plain on her face. "What a bunch of snobs, she muttered, turning to Eliana. "Are you really going to go?"

The school bell rang, **signaling** the start of class. Eliana calmly pulled out her notebook. "Why wouldn't P

From the way Willow had spoken, it was clear she intended to humiliate Eliana if she showed up. Stella frowned, trying to dissuade her. "You don't need to take her seriously. Just ignore her."

Eliana gave a knowing smile, twirling the keycard between her fingers "Why ignore them when I can make them eat their

Willow had set herself up, and Eliana had no intention of letting the opportunity go to waste.

That afternoon, club registration opened

Originally, students could sign up online, but the school's servers had crashed due to the traffic, forcing everyone to register with paper forms.

Stella leaned over as Eliana filled out her form. You're joining the tennis club too? What a coincidence!"

Eliana nodded, finishing the last line. "Yes."

Stella's eyes widened. "Wow! It's one of the most competitive clubs. I hope I can make it in."

They turned in their forms, joining the crowd of students who had chosen the tennis club—a third of their class alone.

Someone caught a glimpse of **Eliana's** registration and began whispering, "Look, she's signing up for the tennis

Eliana's icy glare silenced them, though they kept snickering behind her back.

"She thinks she can make the cut? She's out of her depth, one of them scoffed.

club too...



Unbeknownst to them, Willow was also applying for the tennis club, although she had already bribed her way in, securing a position

Seeing Eliana's name on the form fueled her anger.

That bitch Eliana doesn't deserve to join any clubs. She should be working like a mile, earning her tuition instead of wasting time trying to fit in. She's just doing this to get **close** to **Roman!** she thought to herself, a malicious **glint** flickering in her eyes..

She would make sure Eliana never had a chance to **interact** with Roman. No way would she let that happen.

Willow gave a bright, almost innocent smile as she took the registration form from another person. "Let me handle this, she **said** as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

The person nodded. "Alright, Willow, you're so considerate. Go ahead."

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Willow walked out of the classroom, her steps measured **and** deliberate, ripping **up** Eliana's form as she went.

Two days later, the tennis club's president. Landon went through the registration forms

As a hands-off leader, he rarely involved himself in recruitment, but this time, he was cautious,

To **his** surprise, Eliana's form was missing.

He messaged **her**, confused: [Eliana, did you sign up? Today's the deadline.]

Eliana blinked at the message: [I did. I handed in my form on the first day.]

Landon replied: [It's not here. Maybe someone misplaced it. Just submit it online again, and I'll send you a new link.]

With the online portal still under testing, Eliana was the first student to access it.

She resubmitted her form, which Landon personally approved.

Piecing everything together, she knew Willow was behind the 'missing' form.

