

The Heiress' Return: Six Brothers at Her Beck and Call

Chapter 1541 Scared to Death

The words "previous life" hit Yvette like a gust of wind in the dead of winter, freezing her in place.

Yvette was so shocked that even the simple act of lifting her head became sluggish. She stared at Wynter in disbelief, as if staring at a demon who had no place in the mortal world. How did Wynter know?

There were many things Yvette could understand, but her rebirth was something she had only ever confided to Kenton, who had no reason to tell Wynter! Plus, this was so unimaginable that it wouldn't occur to anyone out of the blue!

"Y-You..." Yvette began trembling, her knees struggling to support her weight. Not even Clyde's imposing presence had ever made her feel this way.

But now, fear gripped her from the depths of her soul. She was terrified, and her shoulder hunched instinctively.

This resembled her biological parents. Yvette was the type who only feared those who were more ruthless than herself, and this was one of those moments.

The realization dawned on her that she was unable to threaten Wynter. Additionally, Wynter's methods were far more sophisticated and calculated than she had ever imagined. Yvette was starting to fear for her life.

Her mind raced, and she found herself voicing a suspicion that had once seemed too bold even to consider. "So, were my mother and Wanda caught because of you?"

Wynter glanced at her. "You can think of it that way."

"You're not the Wynter I know!" Yvette exclaimed as if she had gone completely insane. Tears spilled down her face as she trembled with fear. "Who are you?"

Wynter's own memories were murky, but there was one thing she was sure of. "I'm here to seek justice for the Wynter from the previous life. She did nothing wrong, yet you all conspired to drive her to her death."

Her gaze seemed to pierce through Yvette, stripping away her lies. "You keep insisting that you're innocent. If that were true, then with your second chance at life, you should've known that Wynter wasn't a threat to you.

"She would have eventually been taken back to the Quinnell family. But what did you do? You still made sure she couldn't even live a normal life in Riverburg."

Yvette heard Wynter's voice echo through the villa, like the whisper of a vengeful ghost. Her hands shook violently. "I... I didn't mean to. I won't do it again, I swear. Please, just give me one more chance."

"Sure." Wynter didn't give her a chance to act further.

Yvette's head snapped up. She wondered if she heard Wynter correctly.

Wynter stood there, her voice measured and calm. "I keep people around as long as they're useful. Yvette, now is the time for you to prove your worth.

"You've been reborn, so what do you have to offer me? Think carefully. I'll give you five seconds. Five... four... three..."

Before Wynter could continue, and seeing the silver-haired boy and the umbrella-carrying girl make a subtle move, Yvette blurted out in desperation, "I can tell you everyone's ending! I know the stock market! You're playing the stock market, right?

"I know how every industry will develop over the next ten years! Kenton was an idiot for not listening to me. Please, don't lock me away. My value is more than just that!"

"Stock market?" Wynter's lips curled in amusement. "You seem to have forgotten that I've already beaten your predictions in the stock market."

Yvette's eyes darted in a panic as she scrambled for more. "The Whitman family! I know about the Whitman family!

"When Mr. Whitman Senior passes, the family's ledgers will be investigated. It's all because of a decision made by someone in the provincial government."

Wynter was silent. Because of that, Yvette knew she'd caught her attention and wanted to elaborate.

However, Wynter pulled out a chair. "Let's talk about the Winston family's fate."

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Chapter 1542 The Upcoming Outbreak

Yvette's voice faltered, and she was wary of Wynter. She hadn't expected that after spilling so much information, the first thing Wynter would ask about was the Winston family. By all logic, Wynter shouldn't have paid attention to the Winston family.

Her gaze flickered as if she was about to lie, but Wynter's soft laughter cut through her thoughts, intensifying her fear.

She shuddered slightly and dropped any plans of deception. The more she looked into Wynter's eyes-eyes that seemed to see through everything the more terrified she became. "The Winston family was originally a small, insignificant aristocratic family. You should also know it's never been ranked among the top families in Kingbourne. They were always just... average. But..."

Yvette bit her lip nervously before continuing, "In my previous life, they became the biggest winners. After the Quinnell family collapsed, the Winston family bought them out.

"Because they always maintained a gentle and humble image, no one considered them a real threat. But once they settled down in Kingbourn, the Winston family quickly expanded into the southern market, covering the Grima, Ardes, and Hawford regions.

"They became the largest domestic and international supplier of materials, especially excelling in the medical field."

Wynter raised an eyebrow. "The medical field?"

"Yes." Yvette was slightly hesitant with her reply.

Wynter gestured toward the girl with a parasol, Emilia, behind her.

At that, Yvette shut her eyes tightly and spilled everything she knew. "In about three or four months, a pandemic will sweep across our country. It'll spread through respiratory transmission, supposedly originating from animals.

"The entire nation will come to a standstill, with countless deaths. People will have to work and live from home because there's no cure once you contract this virus. People will suffocate to death.

"When the pandemic hits, many countries will label us as the 'epicenter,' treating us like an outbreak nation. We won't be able to travel or engage in international trade."

Wynter's expression remained calm as she listened intently. However, the pair of teenagers standing nearby raised their eyebrows slightly.

This type of situation was typically under their Special Unit's purview. Viruses like the one Yvette described wouldn't just appear out of nowhere. They had completed several missions that involved eliminating such threats.

If what Yvette said was true, and something of this scale was going to happen in three to four months, there should have already been signs or plans in motion.

Yet, nothing unusual had been detected. Every item brought into or taken out of the country was subject to rigorous screening and inspection.

They'd intercepted attempts to smuggle soil, seeds, and plants that could damage the country's ecosystem. But this potential virus? There were no warnings or signs.

They needed to take whatever Yvette said seriously.

The two of them looked at Wynter and addressed her quietly, "Boss..."

Wynter was clearly deep in thought, her eyes dark with contemplation. After a moment, she looked at Yvette. "When exactly does the outbreak start?"

"December 10th. At first, people thought it was just a normal flu. It wasn't until deaths started happening that they realized something was wrong," Yvette answered in detail, her tone suggesting she wasn't fabricating the information. "Even the experts who came to consult on the cases got infected."

Wynter's voice was steady. "So, what you're saying is that people didn't realize that it was transmissible between humans initially."

"I think so." Yvette didn't know much about hospital operations. In her previous life, despite studying medicine, she hadn't worked in the field before.

She continued, "The Winston family took advantage of the situation and invested heavily in medical equipment stocks. By then, even face masks were selling like crazy, not to mention disinfectants and other medical supplies."

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Yvette couldn't help but regret not opening a factory related to the medical industry in her previous life. After being reborn, she had always aimed to develop in the pharmaceutical field, knowing it would become crucial in three or four months.

"Other businesses, especially those in the physical sector, suffered devastating losses. Only industries directly tied to people's basic needs saw significant growth.

"Countless entertainment establishments went bankrupt. Other than medical supplies, the supermarkets had the highest revenue," Yvette explained in great detail.

She added, "The Winston family solidified their commercial position during this national crisis, and after that, no other family could compete with them. Mr. Winston Senior was truly remarkable."

The admiration in Yvette's tone caught Wynter's attention.

"Tell me how remarkable he was." Wynter's words cut straight to the heart of the matter.

Yvette's gaze flickered for a moment. "Anyone who could build such a large business has to be remarkable."

Wynter approached her. "You know I'm not asking for vague answers."

"Do you believe there are people in this world who can truly practice divination and the Arcane Way?" Yvette responded with a question of her own.

The two teenagers thought to themselves that Wynter did have such abilities, though she had always promoted respect for science due to her work position.

Wynter merely raised an eyebrow, calm and unruffled. "Superstitions shouldn't be relied on. But since you've managed to be reborn, I can believe in other possibilities as well."

Yvette had been trying to probe Wynter's limits, but she didn't expect such a response. It was true that she had been reborn, but it was also clear that the person in front of her was not the original Wynter. Was this some sort of possession?

Yvette didn't dare to voice such thoughts aloud. Instead, she said, "That man gave me an unsettling feeling. He seemed like someone on the verge of death, but he was still tougher than anyone else.

"His cheeks were sunken, yet his eyes were sharp. He even said my fate was unusual the first time he saw me."

Even recalling the encounter made Yvette shudder. She feared Clyde and always had the feeling that the person standing before her wasn't truly alive.

Wynter felt more certain that something was indeed wrong with the Winston family as she listened to Yvette's description. Without saying much more, she raised her hand, signaling for her subordinates to take Yvette away.

Yvette suddenly snapped to her senses. "You promised to let me go!"

"At least you won't die if you go with them." Wynter's voice was steady and cold. "The Wray family has fallen. Do you think your days out here will be easy?"

"You also mentioned that Mr. Winston Senior noticed something unusual about you. Are you not worried that he'll find you and silence you forever? After all, not only do you hold the information he wants, but you also know his endgame and strategies.

"If I were him, I wouldn't let you leave Hawford alive. That way, all the knowledge about the impending pandemic would remain a secret, and the Winston family could truly become a colossal enterprise in four months."

Yvette wasn't a fool. She had manipulated people many times before. Wynter's words quickly brought her to a realization.

Going to the Winston family now was indeed as good as walking into a trap. Since she had told Wynter the secret, she'd lose her only leverage. Clyde wouldn't allow someone like her to live and would eliminate her to safeguard his future.

From initial resistance, Yvette was now desperate to have the two teenagers take her away.

"Is wherever you're taking me safe? You have to understand that the Winston family has connections with that man from the province," Yvette asked nervously, but no one answered her question.

Yvette had no idea about the Special Unit's existence.

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Chapter 1544 The Plague Must Be Stopped

Wynter walked over and stated calmly, "We're not going to the province. There's no need for us to get involved, anyway."

In the past, Yvette would've dismissed Wynter's words as boastful. But to her horror, she came to realize that the present Wynter was more terrifying than ever, despite having figured out she was hiding secrets.

Even with the script of rebirth in her hands, Yvette couldn't foresee where Wynter's ending would lead. Of all the others, Wynter alone was the one whose future remained a mystery. Yvette was aware of the fate befalling the Wynter she once knew, yet the figure before her was an enigma.

Yvette took a step back as a chilling realization crept into her mind. What she had once believed to be certain had changed.

The events surrounding the Quinnells, the Yarwoods, the Hawford business community, and the Havenia stock exchange had all shifted with Wynter's arrival. She was a variable that had drastically changed their trajectories.

At that realization, Yvette broke out into cold sweats as she stared at Wynter in fear.

At that point, Wynter showed no inclination to hide anything from Yvette. Under normal circumstances, the Special Unit would never expose themselves to ordinary citizens during their operations. Even the systems in place couldn't uncover its members' true identities.

One reason for such secrecy was that the Special Unit often undertook classified missions that weren't meant for public knowledge, as any disclosure could incite a public upheaval.

On top of that, the anonymity served to protect the Special Unit members from potential retaliation. An exposed member might be subjected to corruption or coercion, jeopardizing the country's stability.

Fortunately, those who joined the Special Unit possessed strong willpower. While humans tended to betray one another, the Special Unit remained fiercely loyal. That was an unspoken truth well-known among those aware of the organization.

It also explained why Yvette remained oblivious to the Special Unit's existence, even after her rebirth.

The Special Unit only engaged with civilians during their operations. After all, they were putting their lives on the line for critical missions that often concerned the nation's fate or border rescues.

Even in the face of death at the border, they would erase their identities and leave no traces that could endanger the country.

It was said that true safety didn't reside in the outside world but lay within Cascadia itself. Behind such a sense of security were individuals burdened with immense responsibilities.

They ventured into the battlefield not only to rescue lives but also to uphold morality and justice. Unbeknownst to the public, they worked to restore hope to the civilians that was the Special Unit's initial aspiration.

Yvette felt a sense of irony as her hands were cuffed. She never imagined she would find safety beside Wynter. Despite Wynter's disdain for her, Yvette believed she wouldn't resort to cruelty in critical situations, unlike the Wrays and the Winstons.

That said, Yvette didn't see herself as at fault; she was simply terrified. To someone like her, she would only feel secure when imprisoned.

As for Wynter, the priority was to pinpoint the key factors behind the upcoming pandemic. Every virus had an identifiable source, and history had shown instances of widespread outbreaks-like the horrifying cholera and bubonic plague of the Victorian age.

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Chapter 1545 The Good and the Bad

Both cholera and the bubonic plague were highly contagious and potentially fatal bacterial infections. Cholera first emerged in the Edraian subcontinent, particularly around the Rosnet Delta. The local practice of placing corpses into the river significantly increased the risk of cholera outbreaks.

Back then, undeveloped medical technology posed serious challenges to controlling epidemics across Southeast Ibra. On top of that, the emergence of the bubonic plague and smallpox in ancient history left people bewildered and helpless.

It was common for plagues to follow disasters. But with modern medical advancements, it was generally capable of treating such infections-unless the virus originated from an unknown source.

Yvette mentioned the Winstons' profit from the pandemic and the subsequent decline of the country's fortune.

Instinctively, Wynter suspected that the Winston family served as the conduit for the virus' spread. But the Winstons clearly weren't the only culprits-the true mastermind was likely hiding abroad.

Unfortunately, that was merely Wynter's assumption. She assumed certain details had been overlooked, allowing the virus to infiltrate Cascadia through vulnerable channels like animals or water sources.

As Wynter contemplated, a spark ignited in her eyes. She finally realized that Clyde might be the dual-souled medium in the formation.

The Winston family had often gone unnoticed not because of their weakness. On the contrary, it was because the one manipulating them sought something far greater than wealth.

Just as Wynter had witnessed, Clyde betrayed his own sect and forged souls through the Foplyans' assistance in pursuit of immortality.

A smirk played on Wynter's lips. Even if Clyde sought immortality by sacrificing the country's lifeline and fortune, he would first need to gain the Special Unit's approval.

Without hesitation, Wynter turned to one of the teens, Elmer Hull, and instructed, 'From today on, the Winston family is officially on the wanted list. They will be charged with economic crime, just like the Wrays. I want to see a Winston in three days, no matter where they are.'

"Understand, Boss," Elmer replied, though his reference to Wynter left Yvette shuddering.

Yvette doubted that Wynter could catch a medium with such tactics. However, she recalled that Clyde, who seemed capable of predicting everything, had failed to see through Wynter. He also appeared wary of the Yarwood family, which was why Yvette refused to give up on Dalton.

So long as she stayed alive, she still had the chance to rebound. Yvette was certain that the higher-ups would eventually recognize her greater worth when the pandemic struck despite Wynter's affiliations. She believed that her arrest was a blessing, though she might have overestimated the situation.

"Besides what you've sensed from the Winston family, did you feel anything from the Wrays? The Winstons thrived during the pandemic, but how did the Wray family manage to take the lead in the Chamber of Commerce?" Wynter bluntly questioned.

Based on Yvette's reasoning, she followed the Winston family because they had succeeded. In other words, she had likely pursued the Wray family for the same reason.

Yvette felt utterly exposed in front of Wynter. Even if she wanted to fight back, there was no escape. Wynter's piercing gaze had unraveled all her deceptions.

No longer daring to lie, Yvette replied softly, "It's because of the scholarship program.'

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Chapter 1546 That School Seems Fishy

"The scholarship program, you say?' When Wynter heard Yvette's reply, her eyes flickered. Those who knew her well could sense that she had picked up on something, yet she was still missing some details.

Yvette failed to notice Wynter's gaze, believing that she was just as clueless. "I'm not sure how Kenton became the Chamber of Commerce's chairman through the scholarship committee. That program seems more about boosting his reputation than his company's profit.

"Besides, many Chamber of Commerce members possess billions in assets, not to mention the presence of historical families like the Whitmans. Even if the Whitman family has fallen, there are always others ready to take the lead.

"Yet, the Wrays have been the ones in control of Hawford in recent years. It's the ending I foresee."

Yvette resented Kenton for nearly ending her life in front of others. While Wynter had certainly played a role in her downfall, Kenton was equally to blame.

After facing losses, Kenton rallied the aristocratic families to persecute Yvette. Thanks to him, she could hardly live in peace. And so, she decisively disclosed all the details without further prodding from Wynter. "That's right, you might find something in that school," Yvette added, revealing any secret she had learned. At that point, all she wanted was for Kenton to fall. Better yet, she hoped to eliminate the entire Wray family through Wynter.

Yvette continued, "Before becoming the chairman, Kenton attended the opening ceremony of a famous laboratory school in Hawford. He was also honored as the best entrepreneur.

"Since then, he's been portrayed as a benevolent philanthropist, which likely helped his bid for the chairman position."

In truth, Wynter was already aware of the scholarship program. However, Abel's reports made no mention of the laboratory school.

While some scholarships were legitimate, they served as the Wray's hidden interests and their allies in other cases. In other words, something was amiss about that laboratory school.

As the final bell rang at Mindcrest High School, Eliana Linden rose from her seat and packed her things alongside her classmates. Just as the teacher stepped out of the classroom, they received a message on their phone.

The teacher turned back and stated, "Ms. Linden, Mr. Valencia would like to see you."

Hearing that, the students turned their eyes toward Eliana. A few boys huddled together and whispered among themselves.

"Why would Mr. Valencia want to see her? Do you think it's for 'that' reason?' The last sentence sent the boys into a fit of laughter.

Eliana silently gathered her belongings and made her way to the principal's office.

Inside, Gideon Valencia was sipping tea when he heard a knock on the door. After granting permission, Eliana opened the door and walked into the room.

Noticing her arrival, Gideon put down his cup and gestured for her to take a seat. 'Ms. Linden, I understand that 30 students from your class have applied for the scholarship. Unfortunately, it's limited to five recipients. I've called you in to discuss this. Do you truly need this money?'

Eliana quickly replied, "This scholarship means a lot to me, Mr. Valencia. I live with my grandparents, who wake up early every day to sell groceries in the market just to support me.

"Our situation isn't easy. My parents divorced when I was young, leaving me in my grandparents' care. If I can have this money, it will help alleviate some of my grandparents' burden."

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Chapter 1547 What On Earth Is Going On

Gideon adjusted his glasses and looked at Eliana. 'Most of the applicants are either neglected children or raised by their grandparents, so you're all starting from the same point. The scholarship committee controls the funding, and in situations like this, it's every person for themselves.'

Eliana was puzzled. "What do you mean, Mr. Valencia? Should I submit additional documents?"

Gideon gave a soft chuckle and explained, "I told you before, Ms. Linden. It's not the documents that matter- it's having an obedient student. I advised you to meet with the committee leaders last time, but you refused. That wasn't a good response, was it?"

Eliana frowned as she clutched her clothes. Disgust and fear washed over her in response to Gideon's words.

Gideon seemed oblivious to Eliana's distress and moved behind her to pat her back. But instead of the educated, gentle individual he appeared to be, he scrutinized her with a disconcerting gaze.

"You need to be more thoughtful if you want that money. No need to tense up. Take some time to think about what I've said. I'll contact you again in a few days," Gideon stated.

Having received financial aid for her school admission, Eliana had no choice but to agree. Still, a sense of anxiety gnawed at her.

In truth, Eliana wasn't the only scholarship recipient-someone from the next dormitory had also been chosen. While everyone else was thrilled and grateful, Eliana couldn't shake her doubts.

Once, Gideon had directed a fellow student from Eliana's village to a place to secure her scholarship. The student, Penelope Sawyer, was overjoyed and even treated Eliana to a meal.

Having been raised by her grandparents and living on subsidies, Eliana had been jealous of her peers who dined out in restaurants. As such, she could never forget the day when Penelope had taken her out for that special meal.

Penelope had promised to keep in touch, even after leaving school. However, she seemed to have disappeared since her departure.

Not only did she fail to contact Eliana, but she also hadn't returned to their hometown. During the new year, the elderly neighbor eagerly awaited her return.

Eliana doubted that the committed Penelope would do such a thing, yet there was no sign of her anywhere. When Eliana attempted to find her, Gideon publicly announced that Penelope had been recognized by the scholarship committee and sent abroad for further studies.

A year had passed since then, but Penelope still hadn't returned. Eliana felt lost, unsure of who to confide in regarding the matter. Eventually, her grades began to slip.

When her roommates noticed her dejection, they started teasing her.

"What's with the long face, Eliana? You've been chosen! If I were you, I'd be thanking the gods. It's a dream come true!"

"She's right. You're so lucky, Eliana!"

Under their playful persuasions, Eliana swallowed the words she had intended to say. Perhaps, she was truly blessed without even realizing it. Besides, she still had some time to consider Gideon's suggestion.

Maybe it was all in her head. Penelope could've simply stayed in a boarding school after going abroad, making it difficult for her to stay in touch. Once she returned, she could very well be one of those stylish students who studied aboard!

Ignoring her instincts, the young and inexperienced Eliana found herself drawn to the path Gideon suggested.

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Chapter 1548 Something's Off With Lynette

With the help of scholarships, many had completed their studies abroad and found employment at large companies.

Eliana had long wished to support her grandparents after reaching adulthood, especially as her ailing grandfather struggled to cover her tuition fees. She hoped to ease his burden once she started earning a living. It seemed the more kindness one had, the less aware they were of humanity's darker side.

Meanwhile, Wynter remained at the villa after meeting with Yvette. She intended to take precautions based on the information Yvette shared.

When Yvette was taken away, Elmer finally broke his silence. "We can't let the pandemic spread, Boss. I'll head to the customs and inspect the visitors and goods that have passed through once more."

With his extraordinary memory, Elmer was capable of recognizing one after a single glance.

Upon hearing Elmer's suggestion, Wynter looked up at him. "I doubt you'll find anything at customs. Besides, your search could set off some red flags."

Elmer anxiously replied, "But if we look at past outbreaks, any viruses from foreign origin are likely in the incubation period!"

"That's why we need to find out who smuggled the virus in and how they avoided the customs. First, we should locate the Winston family.

"Give Mt. Dragon a call. Since the culprit is a cultivator, he should be under their oversight. We need their assistance," Wynter instructed as she wandered deeper into the villa.

Elmer acknowledged her order. He thought of something and added, 'Please be careful, Boss. We've received word that someone might target you because of your actions in the stock market.'

Wynter glanced back at him and stated, 'Isn't that a good thing? I'd get to see how the bigwigs retaliate. For years, they have pushed the useless Wrays into the spotlight while driving local brands into the ground.

"Such a leader deserves to face consequences at our hands. Don't forget the Special Unit's initial aspirations." Elmer nodded in acknowledgment, and his striking silver hair swayed.

Every member of the Special Unit was exceptional, and they rarely considered one's status while executing their missions. An inscription on the wall of their headquarters read, "Amidst the world's injustices, only through blood does wrath arise."

As Wynter pointed out, the mission wasn't particularly significant or called for their involvement.

Wynter instructed, 'Look into the school Yvette mentioned. I suspect there's more than meets the eye. Also, why hasn't the case involving the Wray family been closed?'

To outsiders, the question seemed puzzling. After all, the case should've been resolved following Kenton's bankruptcy.

But being the lead investigator on the case, Elmer understood Wynter's implication. 'There's nothing wrong with the account from Lynette's club.'

The Wray family's downfall and Kenton's subsequent arrest had been the talk of Hawford. As Kenton's biological sister, Lynette surprisingly seemed unaffected by the scandals. In fact, more patrons had been flocking to her club.

At that moment, Wynter recalled Leo's reaction. Was Lynette possibly the one they should focus on instead of Kenton?

Wynter's eyes dimmed. Lynette's club operated completely above board, which meant Wynter would need a different approach to gather clues.

For the first time, Wynter felt overwhelmed by the information uncovered and the lack of manpower at her disposal. However, she instinctively believed that all incidents were connected to the Winston family.

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Chapter 1549 Wynter's Brilliance

Wynter sensed a connection between the pandemic, the Wrays' scholarship committee, and Lynette's club. Unfortunately, she had yet to piece it all together. Perhaps, she should visit Lynette at her club.

As Wynter was contemplating, the sudden sound of a water droplet hitting the ground echoed. Elmer and the other Special Unit member, Emilia Patterson, exchanged glances before peering into the villa's deepest recess, where darkness loomed so thick that a flashlight was needed for visibility.

It was surprising to see a villa with all its corners obscured by pillars, blocking the light from reaching through. Even stranger was there wasn't a single lamp in the house-an oddity for a typical household.

Wynter wordlessly switched on her phone's flashlight and walked ahead, with the others following behind. As they stepped into the darkness, the air felt noticeably cooler and heavier, giving a damp and oppressive atmosphere.

When Emilia attempted to advance, Wynter stopped her. "You guys wait here. I'll head inside."

If her instincts were right, some spirits might be lingering inside. Though Wynter would be fine on her own, it could be dangerous for the others.

Holding her phone up, Wynter found that the seemingly ordinary paintings and adornments on the wall had been arranged into a formation. It served to hypnotize the viewers and evoke their deepest fear.

In a less severe case, one would simply find themselves walking around in circles. In the worst-case scenario, they could lose their grip on reality and become trapped in their own fears. Eventually, they would turn aggressive and remain stuck in the same path for days.

Rather than a legitimate formation, it was unorthodox and devious.

Without hesitation, Wynter pulled out a silk scarf and covered her eyes. Before anyone could react, she strode down the corridor until darkness completely enveloped her.

At that moment, Leo emerged from the purple sugilite pendant and warned, "Something's not right up ahead, Master. The resentment is too strong. We won't sense it unless we enter this place. Let me guide you."

Wynter merely hummed in response. As Leo noticed how she skillfully evaded the traps, he wondered if it was a cultivator's unique skill. Unfortunately, his doubts were proven wrong. Before entering the corridor, Wynter already had the key to dispel the formation. One of the paintings mirrored the very path she was treading, and she would never overlook a lucky charm's presence.

Wynter was the only one who could memorize the painting at a glance and analyze its details. Elders often claimed that it took ten years of cultivation to draw a powerful talisman. And yet, Wynter could manifest the repression with just a stroke.

It seemed that some abilities truly came down to innate talent.

As Wynter ventured deeper, the metallic scent grew stronger—one she recognized too well. Unmistakably, it was the smell of blood.

Lifting her head, Wynter followed the scent to the right. She vaguely resembled a handsome and poised youth with her eyes blindfolded, carrying an air of ascetic mischief.

Wynter altered her course, relying on her keen sense of smell and hearing. The sound of her black boots striking the stone floor echoed through as each step pressed down on the black fog. Something beneath seemed to stir, only to sink back into the ground with Wynter's stomp.

In the end, Wynter was different from Dalton. While she could disperse the black fog wherever she went, he seemed to blend into it. That said, they shared one similarity—both evoked fear in the entities lurking beneath.

Before long, Wynter reached the end of the path and felt her toes hit something.

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"Are we actually there?" Wynter asked, arching a brow.

In response, Leo affirmed enthusiastically and jumped beside her. All of a sudden, he froze." Wait, Master! Don't take off your blindfold yet!"

Wynter caught on to something he said and asked, "What's wrong? Is there another painting? Is the formation still active?"

"Not exactly, but you might want to be prepared," Leo replied, casting his gaze downward with uncertainty.

Without hesitating, Wynter took off the silk scarf and looked down. Meanwhile, Leo was ready to throw the body before them into the pool if Wynter reacted with horror. Even if a cultivator could accept a spirit's presence, they couldn't bear the sight of a dead man.

However, Wynter merely narrowed her eyes before leaning over. She wrapped the silk scarf around her hand and turned the body over. The figure appeared to be over 100 years old, with white hair and age spots. Beside him lay the rosary bracelet he had always worn.

Wynter recognized the face, though it looked older than the last time she had seen it in the papers. With the loss of collagen, the elderly seemed to be nothing more than skin stretched over bone. It was as if he had succumbed to sudden old age.

Wynter silently examined the elderly's face by touch, much like how experienced doctors discerned if one had undergone facial surgery. When she confirmed that the face was authentic, her eyes darkened. It appeared the elderly man had truly passed away.

"His energy feels familiar, Master. Wait, he was the one who tricked me!" Leo exclaimed upon the sudden realization.

As he leaned in closer, his confusion grew. "But that's not right. Why is his energy so weak?"

Ignoring his question, Wynter threw the silk scarf away and called Elmer. "Call off the search for Clyde Winston. He's right here."

Elmer was baffled. He would've long noticed if Clyde had been in the villa. Given the Special Unit's vigilance, they couldn't have possibly missed Clyde.

At that moment, Wynter clarified, "Clyde's dead. Initial findings indicate he didn't die long ago. We need to dig deeper into what really happened.

"Considering the low temperature in this place, it might affect the actual time of death. This also explains why we can't detect the decaying odor."

Wynter wondered who might have killed Clyde. From Leo's and Yvette's remarks, Clyde clearly wasn't one to be taken lightly. Yet, there he was, having unexpectedly died of old age, with no visible wounds to explain.

"Get the forensics team in here. Use the astrolabe to get into the corridor and fix the lights.

I've destroyed the paintings on the wall. Burn them all," Wynter instructed in a low voice. As the Special Unit quickly complied with her orders, Wynter examined her surroundings. Before her lay a lotus-shaped pool, surrounded by walls engraved with dragon-like reliefs.

It was said that the dragon had nine children. Each dragonling was distinctive and seemed to be at an earlier phase of metamorphosis, akin to a wyrm. But that wasn't the point-the most striking detail was that the dragons appeared to be biting down on a jewel.

A sense of déjà vu washed over Wynter. As she instinctively stepped closer, the metallic scent grew stronger. The scent of blood turned out to be coming from the reliefs!