

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

Chapter 1561 Here Comes Wynter

The school's surveillance cameras couldn't capture this spot, and across the street, a tree conveniently blocked the view.

If anyone tried to piece the footage together, they'd only see Eliana stepping out of the school gates and disappearing after crossing the street. This was exactly the effect they wanted.

Gideon had long turned and walked away, as if he was just here for a stroll and casually chatting with the guard while helping a student out.

At this very moment, Wynter, riding her motorcycle, happened to witness the scene. She had initially planned to enter the school but instead quickly turned her bike around, silently tailing the minivan.

No one noticed her. Inside the vehicle, everyone's attention was fixed on Eliana.

A creeping sense of dread washed over Eliana.

Colby chuckled lightly. "You'll get used to it. They'll handle all your paperwork for studying abroad."

His words were nothing more than a tactic to calm her. There was no "studying abroad", but it was important to keep Eliana's emotions in check. The last thing they wanted was a girl crying hysterically, which would be such a hassle.

If one really thought about it, there was no way an opportunity like this would fall into someone's lap without strings attached.

Sure, some girls would actually be sent overseas to study the higher-ups had more than enough money to throw around. Sponsoring 100 students was an easy feat.

But for others—those who had already caught that man's eye—they had to stay! Those girls had real value! Colby's laughter was a stark difference to his appearance. He glanced in the rearview mirror. "What's with the person behind us? Is someone following us?"

As soon as he spoke, Wynter leaned forward, revving her engine before speeding past them with a smooth and impressive maneuver.

"You're being paranoid. Why would anyone follow us?"

Colby glanced sideways. "I've just been under a lot of pressure lately."

The men exchanged some light-hearted banter, and the mood in the minivan seemed to relax.

But Eliana's palms were sweaty. She didn't even know what she was so terrified of. They were supposed to be employees from the scholarship committee, so why was she feeling this way now?

Unlike Eliana's confusion, Wynter could clearly sense that something was wrong with the people in the minivan. She had followed them for a reason.

In a normal situation, no student would leave school during class, especially to get into a vehicle they weren't familiar with.

Though she had been far away earlier, Wynter noticed Eliana's subtle, hesitant movements, indicating her reluctance to get into the vehicle.

The strange positions of the school's security guard and Gideon also caught her attention. They could see the girl getting into the car, yet as school staff, they did nothing to stop her. Immediately, Wynter thought of the scholarship committee.

The moment she sped past them earlier, it was a calculated move to prevent the men from realizing they were being followed.

She needed to find out where these people were taking Eliana, but she wasn't about to act alone. Losing track of them or, worse, letting something happen to Eliana would be the last thing she wanted.

Without hesitation, Wynter pressed the button on her Bluetooth earpiece and made a call. The team on the other end was part of the anti-corruption unit, the same group working with Lucas.

"Hello?" The voice on the other end was cautious. It was weird for someone to call them, after all. They wondered if the informant had new information.

"This is the reporting hotline, correct?" Wynter's voice was steady. "There's a black minivan currently traveling west. The license plate is KJ4-9Y7Z. The occupants are involved in human trafficking, and there is a high school girl inside.

"They may have other victims at their destination, and this operation is likely connected to the case you're currently working on. I suggest you track the vehicle immediately using the license plate for a city-wide pursuit."

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Chapter 1562 Wynter Has the Swag

Wynter hung up after saying that. She was confident that with Lucas on the other end, they would definitely jump into action. Furthermore, her message wasn't something anyone would dare overlook.

Lucas had just arrived in town after his transfer. He hadn't even had the chance to attend the conference, but as soon as he stepped off the high-speed train, he was already met by a welcoming party-people of considerable status in Hawford. After all, he deserved the respect his title warranted.

But the timing of his phone call was fortuitous-it was a call from the anti-corruption unit. He hadn't forgotten the purpose of his reassignment. He glanced over at Juan.

"Mr. Keller has personal matters to deal with." Juan was quick to manage the situation, efficiently blocking some of the people approaching Lucas.

These were all influential public officials from Hawford, and Lucas couldn't afford to waste too much time.

After hearing the details of the issue, he immediately issued orders. "Act on what she said. Whether this is a prank or not, lockdown the city and alert the SWAT team."

This was a move intended to circumvent local authority for a more direct action.

Wynter had not misjudged Lucas. He was indeed someone who understood the gravity of the situation.

Lucas was already receiving such a call on his very first day in this new role, and he couldn't shake the feeling that the circumstances in Hawford were more complicated than he had anticipated.

Yet, the urgency in that call reminded him so much of Wynter, whom he hadn't seen in a long time.

Meanwhile, Wynter had been following the black minivan for quite some time, navigating a series of winding roads that led toward the countryside.

She was very familiar with Hawford's layout and realized that if the vehicle didn't hit the highway soon, she would be putting herself at risk of being discovered. The fewer cars on the road, the more she stood out.

Rather than waiting for them to spot her, she decided to reveal herself, but in a way that wouldn't link her to any kind of tracking. With that in mind, she accelerated.

The people in the minivan hadn't taken Wynter's presence seriously. Colby continued to reassure Eliana, trying to

ease her nerves.

Just then, in the middle of the road, Wynter executed a sharp turn, stopping right in front of the minivan- fearless and bold.

Colby immediately hit the brakes, the screeching tires coming to a halt.

"Why did you stop like that?" Colby berated. After all, this would be anyone's first reaction to a situation like this.

Wynter seemed to completely ignore them, perfectly embodying the attitude of a scion who looked down on others.

"My vehicle won't move. Does anyone have a lighter?" She simply parked her motorcycle, removed her helmet with one hand, and smirked, looking incredibly cool.

Eliana didn't know where her sudden courage came from. Perhaps it was from seeing Wynter and the fact that she still felt uncomfortable in the minivan, she shouted from inside the vehicle, "Miss, I want to go with you!"

Wynter's gaze softened slightly as she looked over. "What's going on here? Young lady, I'm sure you should be in class now. Why aren't you studying and are out here instead?"

Several cars behind her noticed someone blocking the way and quickly got out, approaching Wynter.

"Miss, this isn't your concern. We're from the school, helping students study abroad. And Ms. Linden, why did you say that out of nowhere?" Colby asked Eliana.

Eight men stood in front of Wynter. All of them walked out and were dressed in suits, some quite large. They looked at Wynter and smirked lowly. "Don't go looking for trouble. Just push your motorcycle into the tree's shades where it's cooler."

As one of them stepped toward Eliana to pull her back into the car, his hand was suddenly grasped tightly.

It was Wynter. She looked at the big men, her voice calm and indifferent. "I find it quite cool here. What can you do about it?"

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Chapter 1563 Coming Out Victorious

Colby frowned upon hearing this. The group of men exchanged glances and began to take a serious look at Wynter.

They had been in Hawford for quite some time and had never encountered someone so arrogant. They thought Wynter must be a scion out of town, unaware of the rules here. It seemed she had a death wish for blocking their way.

What these men didn't know was that if they'd paid even a little attention to the stock market, they would have heard that a girl from the Quinnell family had arrived in town not long ago. And she was known for putting troublemakers in their place.

"Why don't you ask around who's in charge here? If you're so eager for trouble, you can stay here and cool off along with your bike!" One of the men rushed aggressively toward Wynter, raising his arm high, ready to punch. The others closed in as well.

But before the man could even touch her, his hand was suddenly gripped tightly. Wynter moved swiftly, balancing herself on one leg, using her motorcycle as a pivot. With one move, three of the men were knocked to the ground.

Colby was stunned by this sudden turn of events. He hadn't expected a young woman like Wynter to charge straight at them like this.

Without giving him any time to be surprised, Wynter swung her bike and grabbed one of the men. Her voice was calm. "It's more fitting for you to stay here instead."

"Wha-"

Before anyone could respond, Wynter kicked the man in front of her, sending him crashing to the ground with immense force. The man's fist she had been holding made a sharp crack sound as the bones shattered into pieces.

Wynter, who also happened to be well-versed in medicine, struck their pressure points mid-fight, rendering them unable to even cry out in pain.

The remaining three hesitated for a moment before charging at Wynter together. Wynter smirked lazily. With a casual flick of her helmet, she knocked another one to the ground!

In an instant, they instinctively felt the danger and began retreating, trying to run. But it was too late.

One of the men didn't even manage to see how Wynter moved before a tremendous force gripped his neck, slamming him hard against the car. He struggled to breathe, and his eyes widened with fear.

Yet, Wynter seemed completely unfazed, her deep, emotionless eyes fixed on him. At the corners of her eyes, a faint crimson glow shone, like a blood-stained moon on the horizon.

"Open the door and release the girl," Wynter ordered.

In less than a minute, every one of their men had been taken down. Colby, who had been smirking just moments ago, now had a completely different expression. He wanted to start the car, but the path was blocked by his own men.

While Wynter didn't need to worry about getting caught, they certainly needed to avoid the patrols outside. Moreover, with a new official's recent arrival, getting exposed would cause them more trouble than it was worth.

Without hesitation, Colby opened the car door, his palms slick with cold sweat as he thought about how he would explain this to the higher-ups.

Wynter tossed Colby aside and swiftly pulled Eliana out of the minivan. Then, her gaze landed on Colby's face as she asked with feigned ignorance, "What exactly are you doing here? Are you forcing students to accompany guests for drinks?"

Colby looked at Wynter as if he had just seen the devil, yet at the same time, he let out a sigh of relief.

He thought that she had only stopped their minivan by chance and didn't know what they were really up to. If Eliana hadn't called for help just now, Wynter might have only asked for a lighter and nothing more.

After all, the scions he knew were all like that, acting as if everyone was beneath them.

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"You've misunderstood. We meant no harm and were just following orders to take her to complete some paperwork.

"Ms. Linden here is an outstanding student, and her school recommended her for an overseas exchange program. If you don't believe me, you can ask her."

Colby shifted the focus onto Eliana, fully expecting that a kid like her wouldn't be able to say much.

Indeed, Eliana wasn't good at lying. Under Wynter's gaze, she nodded slightly and added, " But I kept feeling that something was off. Maybe I was just overthinking it, which is why I asked for your help, miss."

She couldn't exactly tell Wynter that her gut feeling alone had driven her to seek help. Being around these people gave her chills. Although they hadn't done anything wrong, something just didn't feel right to her, but she couldn't put her finger on what it was.

While Eliana couldn't articulate it, Wynter, being a professional, had no such problem. Why do you need eight or nine grown men to take one young girl to handle study abroad paperwork?

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"Can't the school teachers or relevant departments do it for her? This whole setup doesn't look like paperwork processing-it looks more like kidnapping and trafficking."

Wynter's words made everyone present visibly react. The men on the ground exchanged glances with Colby.

They knew they couldn't stay there much longer. If the police came, it would be trouble. Even if it was just traffic cops, they'd have to go through the paperwork. They couldn't afford to get caught up in this.

Meanwhile, Eliana, who was receiving financial support from these people, suddenly felt enlightened by Wynter's sharp words. Indeed, that was exactly what was strange!

She clutched the hem of her clothes as she remembered Penelope, who never returned home. Fear flickered in her eyes. "Miss, I don't want the scholarship anymore. I'm going to tell the principal to give it to someone else!"

The principal? Eliana had mentioned a key figure.

In fact, even if Eliana hadn't brought it up, Wynter would still have secretly investigated the school. These people had taken a student right from the school gates, while the security guard and the principal just stood by and watched. There was definitely something fishy going on.

Although Wynter didn't know the situation's full scope yet, she could already guess the gist of it.

The school and the Wray family's "scholarship committee" were part of a scheme to funnel

interests. These selected students were essentially goods purchased by the Wray family. Under the guise of a scholarship committee, they smoothed over any objections.

Where the students ended up wasn't clear yet, but it was certain they didn't stay with the Wray family.

Wynter suspected that the Wray family was trading these girls for something else. The more Wynter uncovered about this shady operation, the colder her gaze became.

This scheme greatly benefited Kenton, helping him go from having nothing to becoming even more powerful than the Whitman family in just a decade. He even nearly became the Chamber of Commerce's chairman.

Whoever was behind this wasn't just rich-they had to be powerful, too. Wynter also believed that more than one party was involved.

However, Colby, who was clearly the ringleader, was clever. Hearing what Eliana said, he immediately responded, "Ms. Linden, we were just taking you to verify your documents for eligibility. It's a rare opportunity, and many students are eager for it.

"If you didn't want to go, you should have spoken up earlier to avoid this misunderstanding. You see, we adults tend to be overly cautious. We didn't mean to scare you by bringing too many people."

Colby remained polite throughout.

Eliana couldn't really accuse him of anything, so she leaned a little closer to Wynter for comfort.

Wynter looked up, her voice soft and casual. "Of course she was scared. You should at least compensate her for the mental distress.

"Otherwise, people might think you're trafficking young girls, especially with how you got physical earlier. That's not how law-abiding citizens behave, now, is it?"

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Chapter 1565 In Your Face

The three men Wynter had knocked to the ground were still writhing in pain. They wondered how she still had the audacity to talk about abiding by the law.

Colby knew his men were losing their cool. After all, they'd never been treated this way in Hawford.

He quickly stepped in front of them and forced a smile. "Yes, you're absolutely right. We might have gotten off on the wrong foot. But... I don't recognize you. Are you not from Hawford?"

Colby was fishing for information, trying to figure out who Wynter was. He needed to understand why they ended up being humiliated today.

Wynter, sharp as always, instantly understood his intentions. A small smile tugged at her lips.

Since things had already escalated to this point, it didn't really matter whether she revealed her identity or not. Whoever their higher-ups were, they would undoubtedly investigate her soon, anyway.

So, rather than keeping quiet, she decided to draw all attention to herself. This way, Lucas and his team could investigate in secret and gather evidence without any loose ends escaping.

"I'm indeed not from Hawford." Wynter glanced at them coolly, her voice laced with an authoritative detachment. "I'm here for business. My temper's not the best, so you should have heard about my... reputation by now."

One of the thugs gave a mocking laugh, wincing at the pain it caused his bruised face.

He thought Wynter sure could talk big. Did she really think people should know here in Hawford, with all its vastness? Ridiculous. They were already plotting their revenge. Once Colby found out who she was, there was no way she'd escape unscathed!

Colby was thinking the same thing, but his expression remained neutral and friendly. "Reputation, you say? What kind of reputation? Care to share?"

Once they knew her name and her line of business, they could make sure she wouldn't last a day in Hawford. Blocking their higher-up's "goods" was a grave mistake. She had no idea who she was messing with!

"There's nothing inconvenient about it," Wynter said casually as she lifted the helmet, placing it in Eliana's hands before gesturing for her to get on the motorcycle.

Wynter then tilted her chin toward a nearby billboard. "That family? I took them down."

That family?

Colby and the thugs all turned their heads to look at the billboard that hadn't been taken off yet. It displayed a company logo they all recognized instantly. Their faces immediately paled.

That was the Wray family's billboard! That would mean...

Colby turned to look at Wynter, trembling with fear. "You're from the Quinnell family..."

Colby didn't finish the sentence but quickly bit his tongue, stopping just in time.

He couldn't believe it! What horrible luck they had today, running into someone like her! Of all people, they'd crossed paths with this particular storm bringer. And Eliana just had to ask for help right at this moment!

They were practically fearless, but even they knew about Wynter's recent actions in Hawford. The Wray family was ruined-reduced to crawling in the gutters-because of her!

Just moments ago, they had been planning to ensure Wynter couldn't operate in Hawford, but now? They only wanted to flee, report back to their superiors, and sever any ties with her immediately.

They were done for if she picked up on anything more. After all, the Quinnell family was notorious for meddling in others' affairs!

"You're the legendary Ms. Quinnell... We were ignorant fools!" Colby quickly changed his tone, forcing a smile of admiration onto his face. It was as if Wynter had suddenly become a hero in his eyes.

"What you did to the Wray family was absolutely brilliant! To be honest, our company had issues with them, too. They owe us a lot of money, and no matter how many times we've asked, they never paid up. A shady business like that deserved to go under!"

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Chapter 1566 A Warning From Penelope

"Yeah, he's right," the rest of the thugs echoed, the agreements sounding forced and insincere. In reality, they were just eager to leave as quickly as possible.

However, Wynter wasn't about to let them go so easily. Since they had been probing her, she decided to return the favor. Casually, she asked, "Oh? Does the Wray family owe your company money? Which company might that be?" Colby hadn't expected such a question. He paused for a moment before quickly replying, "Our company is small. It's not worth mentioning and is certainly nothing compared to yours."

"Are you truly sponsoring students despite being a small company? Quite admirable," Wynter remarked with a faint hint of praise.

The compliment sent shivers down Colby's spine. "It's all thanks to our investor. He doesn't just fund us, but he invests in many companies, too. He's from a small town and is just trying to help students get better education opportunities."

"How kind of him. We should meet up sometime." Wynter then added casually, "Since we were so fated to meet each other, how about exchanging contacts?"

Colby was taken aback. "Huh?" His face clearly showed that he thought he had misheard.

Wynter chuckled. "What's the matter? Am I not good enough?"

At this point, Colby knew that refusing would only make things worse. Reluctantly, he pulled out his phone and added her number.

Only someone like Wynter could turn the tables like this. She managed to turn these men into her "buddies", trapping them in a corner with no way out and making them squirm.

"Alright, that's settled. I'll be taking this young lady with me now," Wynter said casually after they exchanged

contacts.

With a confident wave, she walked away, leaving the group of men utterly bewildered by the whirlwind that had just hit them.

"What do we do now, Mr. Leblanc?" one of the men asked Colby.

Colby exhaled slowly. "We'll head back. You can't simply mess with people from the Quinnell family."

They knew it wouldn't be easy to deal with the Quinnell family, especially Wynter. They had no idea what she was really thinking!

As the temperature in Hawford dropped sharply with fall's arrival, Wynter ordered two cups of hot milk tea upon entering the shop.

She then found a seat by the window and sat down, noticing the fear and unease in Eliana's eyes. To comfort her, Wynter gently patted her back and handed her one of the hot drinks, after inserting the straw.

"What's your name?" Wynter asked.

Eliana snapped out of her daze. "Eliana Linden."

"And those people at the school gate earlier, where were they planning to take you?"

Eliana shook her head. "I don't know. The principal said it had something to do with the scholarship."

Wynter sensed there was more to the story. "Has anyone else in your school had a similar experience? Had they applied for a scholarship before they were taken away?"

At that, Eliana's face showed a sudden realization. "There was a senior of mine, Penelope. She applied for the scholarship, too, but she never came back after she left the school that day.

"The principal told us that the scholarship committee had noticed her potential and sent her abroad for further studies. He encouraged us to follow her example."

As Eliana spoke, uncertainty crept into her voice. "I tried messaging her a few times, but she never responded. When I tried calling, her phone was always off.

"But a while back, she sent me a voice message, warning me to not apply for the scholarship. She was about to explain why when she suddenly stopped speaking. Then, she stopped replying altogether."

Wynter sipped her milk tea, her mind beginning to piece things together.

Suddenly, Eliana grabbed Wynter's arm in a panic, as if she had remembered something. "The scholarships are funded by a sponsorship committee. Most of the students in our school are neglected children.

"When the principal told me to meet the committee's leaders, I didn't think much of it because I really needed that money. I completely forgot about the message Penelope sent me."

Wynter asked her to take her phone out and show her the chat with Penelope.

After examining it for a moment, Wynter made a quick call. "I will give you a phone number, and I need you to trace this phone's current IP location."

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Chapter 1567 Coddling Wolf

On the other end of the line, the person didn't say a word. With a stern expression and focused eyes on the computer screen, he simply nodded.

Who else could it be but wolf? He had always worked behind the scenes, particularly since he started tracking the Winston family's ongoing activity. It attracted the least attention by making him follow Logan.

Wynter had the option of using Whitley. But the moment a Saviour appeared, it would surely draw unwanted attention, especially since their target was a cultivator. Sending Whitley out would be like handing a precious treasure directly to the enemy.

Thus, Wynter decided to have Wolf trail Logan, while Whitley stayed close to Dalton.

Wynter wasn't overly concerned about Dalton making any sudden moves. In fact, Whitley was safest by Dalton's side. The Yarwood family bore the fortune of heavenly luck, protected unless some predestined calamity struck.

Anyone who tried to harm Dalton would likely be met with dire consequences, given the constant flow of regal purple aura that surrounded him. Having Whitley nearby not only concealed his presence but also allowed him to restore some of its powers.

Wynter could only hope that Whitley and Wolf wouldn't clash when they met. But... it should be fine with Dalton around.

Yet, she couldn't resist giving an extra reminder, "Finish investigating the current task thoroughly, and don't eat anything suspicious. If you meet someone who irritates you, don't lose your temper. In a few days, I'll take you out to stir up some trouble."

At the mention of "trouble", Wolf's round eyes lit up with excitement. He had been going solo for missions recently, and it had been ages since he'd gotten involved in any real action!

He nodded enthusiastically, his expression earnest and determined, as if to say, "I'll be good, and I won't lose my temper."

Wynter chuckled softly. "As for the number I just asked you to trace if the IP address disappears, lock in the last known location."

Wolf's playful face turned suddenly serious. Wynter had a knack for handling kids like him.

In recent days, the Special Unit had been tiptoeing around Wolf, fearing they might provoke him. They desperately wanted results but didn't dare rush him. Even high-ranking officials had approached with a conciliatory tone to request progress.

After all, employing someone of Wolf's age technically bordered on child labor, and no one wanted to seem unkind to a kid.

But truth be told, Wolf only listened to Wynter, refusing to pay attention to anyone else's requests. However, he did enjoy physical tasks despite his stoic expression. Wolf rarely showed any emotion, making it hard to believe he was still just a kid.

Without Wynter, Wolf might never have been recruited in the first place.

In reality, these people just didn't know the right way to handle him. They assumed every hacker, especially one as brilliant as Wolf, was indifferent to money or material gain.

What they didn't know was that Wolf, when he was much younger, loved nothing more than sleeping atop piles of gold.

If one needed a method to handle him, they could just learn from Dalton. He barely spoke a word and only scanned Wolf's code when needed.

Wynter had already received enough feedback to trust Wolf with investigating this matter. Unlike Club Solstice's temporary shutdown, where time could be somewhat flexible, saving people from a situation like this required urgency.

According to Eliana, she wasn't the first, nor would she be the last.

Just three days ago, the school had sent off several other students from the same cohort as Eliana. She was supposed to be among them, but Anson had fallen ill, and an unsettling feeling held her back from accepting the offer. That instinct was what led to the situation today.

As Wynter listened quietly, a rough outline of the scheme began to form in her mind.

Penelope was most likely in dire straits, possibly beyond saving. Or perhaps, she was entirely cut off from the

outside world. Otherwise, it was hard to believe she wouldn't have contacted her family in such a long time. Wynter suspected that the operation went beyond just this school or even Hawford.

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Chapter 1568 The Odd Interview

Wynter needed to figure out who the "buyers" were. Missing just one would mean another student sold off.

"Do these classmates of yours share anything in common besides their family background?" Wynter asked. Eliana shook her head, but after a moment, she added, "Everyone has really good grades, so no one thought there was anything wrong with being selected for the scholarship."

Good grades? Wynter took note of that before scrolling through Penelope's social media. Even without being friends on the platform, hacking into it was simple for Wynter.

Through Penelope's post, Wynter could tell she was a cheerful, optimistic girl who wouldn't post anything negative. However, one post stood out. Wynter had to scroll back to read it again.

Despite the upbeat post, accompanied by a picture of a cup of milk tea, the caption read, "About to start a new chapter! All hard work will be paid off. The interview was a bit odd, but no big deal! Let's go!"

Wynter's finger hovered over the word "interview". "Do the chosen students have to go through an interview?" "I think so," Eliana replied, holding her cup and seeming to recall the details. "Back then, Penelope prepared for the interview for a long time. She practiced foreign languages every day, hoping it would come in handy when she went abroad."

Wynter's eyes darkened slightly. "Was the interview held at your school?"

"No." Eliana immediately shook her head. "It was somewhere else. The students who didn't pass the interview were sent back, but I heard they got direct entry into universities and stopped attending classes."

Wynter's lips curled into a smile, though there was no warmth in it. "That must be quite an irresistible offer for the students."

No student who had worked hard for their education would pass up such an opportunity. Whoever was orchestrating this knew exactly how to exploit their desires.

"That's why everyone was so excited when they were selected. Penelope was so thrilled she didn't sleep that night."

Then, Eliana remembered something and quickly added, "But there was something strange. After the interview, Penelope was more than just overjoyed. There was something else."

Eliana pointed to the milk tea picture. "Oh, and this photo was taken near the interview location. She even called me after the interview, but I missed the call.

"When I called her back, she said it was nothing and she was just overthinking about some things. She said she was rewarding herself with milk tea and even bought me one."

Eliana and Penelope were different from many of their classmates. Most others indulged in Starbucks, while Eliana had never even stepped into Starbucks, despite there being one close to their school.

For her and Penelope, even milk tea was a rare treat-something sweet to enjoy.

Whether they were celebrating or comforting themselves, they would buy one for each other. They bought it with their scholarship money, a small indulgence they allowed themselves every now and then.

Eliana had often been looked down on by her classmates, who mocked her for never having had Starbucks, calling her a country bumpkin.

But she never argued back. After all, it was true she wasn't from Hawford, and she admitted that spending over five dollars on a cup of coffee felt expensive.

Her grandparents would have to collect bottles for a long time just to afford one. Eliana didn't want to spend money on something so unnecessary and didn't see it as something shameful.

She believed that working hard was what mattered. Plus, knowing that Penelope felt the same way was enough for

her.

But that day, Penelope did seem a bit odd. Eliana recounted everything she knew to Wynter, "That day when I met up with her, she suddenly told me that some people spend over 15 dollars on just a bottle of water but still aren't satisfied."

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Chapter 1569 Lucas and Wynter's Teamwork

Eliana lifted her gaze and continued, "I have no idea what that means. Penelope never said things like that."

Wynter zoomed in on the picture, believing she could identify the location by the milkshake store sign and the surrounding buildings' colors. She then sent the picture to Wolf to narrow down the exact location.

Since Eliana mentioned that the interview felt odd, Wynter decided to check it out herself. She had wondered what might provoke an innocent girl into a sudden moment of clarity.

"Do you know exactly who the alumni you mentioned are?" Wynter questioned carefully.

If she could find the name list, she might discover the connections between the students. From there, she would uncover the buyers' motives behind their purchases. Such dealings would carry significant risks, and Wynter suspected that it involved much more than acquiring a girl's body.

Having learned from the club incident, she now carried out her investigations thoroughly before taking any action. Otherwise, she would risk alerting her adversaries. Their tactics were far more insidious than she had anticipated, testing the very limits of human virtue.

For instance, they might bribe the parents to cease the investigation, bringing certain inquiries to a halt.

Wynter couldn't care less about other issues, but she was deeply concerned for the abducted students' safety. That was why she took more precautions than ever before, such as tailing the minivan just now.

After meeting Eliana, Wynter instructed Lucas to refrain from pursuing the minivan. Instead, he was told to record its license plate and trace its last stop through the system.

Typically, no one would dare to issue orders to a big shot. In fact, the newly appointed Lucas outranked the provincial officials and was even accompanied by about ten subordinates. Those receiving him greeted him with deep respect, underscoring his esteemed status.

Compared to his first appearance in Southdale, Lucas was now a changed man. With his backers' support, he quickly climbed the ranks. Even so, his transfer was anything but normal.

Lucas had earned his position not only by resolving several major cases but also by generating significant economic income wherever he went. He excelled in urban development and gained the citizens' admiration.

While Wynter had also played a role in such successes, Lucas stood out as a remarkable individual in his own right. Upon receiving the message from the Special Unit, he confirmed that it was sent by Wynter.

Immediately, he ordered his men to hold their positions and carry out the investigation discreetly. On the other hand, Wynter would conduct hers out in the open. Instead of looking into the laboratory school, he would investigate the minivan's drivers.

It was unexpected to see the incredible teamwork between Lucas and Wynter.

Eliana shook her head in response to Wynter's question, revealing her limited knowledge of the case. "I didn't attend the interview. Only those who did would know the details. However, Mr. Valencia has a full list of names since he's in charge."

Wynter considered restraining Gideon, but the time had yet to come. If he were taken into custody, the mastermind could be alarmed and sever their ties, as seen in past incidents. If that were the case, Wynter might end up losing all the leads she had.

For now, Gideon needed to be retained and placed in a prominent position.

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

Chapter 1570 Gideon's Failed Promotion

Wynter turned to Eliana and instructed, "Don't mention the incident to Mr. Valencia. Try to act normal when you return. If he asks you about it, tell him you're still considering it. Express your fear, but also subtly hint at your desire to go aboard while emphasizing you're not ready yet.

"Also, don't tell anyone about our conversation. I've added your number to my contacts. If you notice anything unusual, message me right away. I'll have someone to protect you and your family around the clock, so there's no need to worry."

Wynter rose from her seat and continued, "Come on, I'll give you a ride back to school. I'm sure those guys will be calling Mr. Valencia soon."

Eliana stared at her. Upon recalling the men's respectful demeanor toward Wynter, she hesitated and asked, "You'll save Penelope, won't you, miss?"

At that point, Eliana had realized the gravity of her situation. The men clearly didn't work for a legitimate company. Their claims of sending students abroad for further studies were nothing but lies. Penelope might be in serious danger.

As the thought sank in, tears started welling in Eliana's eyes. "I'll do whatever you say. Let's take them down together. I'm not afraid of anything as long as I can save everyone!"

Wynter was stunned by Eliana's declaration as she picked up her helmet. She then turned to Eliana with a smile. "I'll inform you when the time comes, you sweet girl."

She called to her with such tenderness that Eliana felt a surge of courage she had never felt before. Aside from Penelope, she had never received such kind words from anyone her age.

Though Wynter seemed older, they were still relatively close in age. Yet, there was something about Wynter that made Eliana feel she could rely on her completely. It was as if Wynter could shoulder the world when it came crashing down.

Sitting at the back of the motorcycle, Eliana felt a newfound strength. Anyone else would've struggled to regain their composure after experiencing such a traumatic event. But with Wynter by her side, Eliana knew she could no longer remain silent.

The situation at Mindcrest High School had gone as Wynter expected. Gideon, who was eagerly waiting for his gains, wore a stiff smile upon receiving a call.

Colby didn't have time to share all the details, as he needed to report back to the higher-ups. He simply relayed, "Eliana Linden was stopped from leaving. You're settling this yourself. The higher-ups have specifically asked for that girl, so try to send her over once more."

"Don't speak too much and just observe her. Make sure she doesn't spill anything. More importantly, keep an eye out for anyone trailing her. They might intend to investigate your school."

Gideon's face instantly drained of color. Nothing terrified him more than the likelihood of the school being investigated. Having finally secured his position, he couldn't afford any blunder.

After all, the higher-ups had promised Gideon a promotion if he completed his tasks perfectly. If he succeeded, he would be given a position in the Department of Education.