

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

Chapter 1721 Patient Zero

A short while later, the nurses who followed Nigel gathered in the decontamination chamber.

Nigel spoke to them with a solemn tone. "After I leave, you must do your best to care for every patient. As medical professionals, we must have the heart of a parent for them. I believe in all of you. If you have any doubts, don't hesitate to ask me.

"In times like this, we, the medical staff, must be at the frontline. You're young, and maybe you've never experienced such things before. But now, life has changed. From a peaceful existence, you must now bear the weight of responsibility."

The nurses' eyes glistened with unshed tears. Nigel had always been dedicated to his work, and every patient at the hospital praised him as a miracle doctor.

"Dr. Alistair, we won't feel confident without you. We have a leader when you're here, and we know your abilities."

"Please don't leave, Dr. Alistair. We'll fall apart without you."

"We've been learning from you since we entered the hospital. We know it's for our own good when you're strict with us. After all, a single mistake in this field could cost a life. We may not always hear you say it, but we understand."

"We'll go beg the dean for you."

Nigel waved his hand. "No need. Take care of the patients here, and protect yourselves. Remember to wear an additional mask under your protective gear. The situation may pass quickly, or it may drag on longer than we expect. No one can say for sure, but you must look after yourselves."

The young nurse was the most upset, and the others seemed disheartened as well.

But Nigel didn't just gather them to say these things. More importantly, this was the only place in the hospital where they could avoid the surveillance cameras.

"Who's local here?" Nigel asked.

Four of them raised their hands.

Nigel narrowed his eyes. "Remember not to go home. Stay at the hospital if you need to rest. Listen very carefully to what I have to say next. The virus source is still unclear, the transmission method is unknown, and there may be a Patient Zero.

"It's possible... No, it's already clear that human-to-human transmission has occurred. There's no specific cure yet, and the results of treatment are uncertain, as you can see. So, stay safe."

The medical staff in the room understood the gravity of his words. Every phrase and word pointed to one grim possibility-they too might be infected.

"Dr. Alistair, I... I just started my internship this year. The higher-ups have started developing a cure after learning about this, right?"

Faced with their hopeful looks, Nigel couldn't bring himself to say the truth.

The higher-ups probably didn't know about this yet because those below were suppressing it, afraid to report the situation. Not only that, but they had silenced him, too.

Nigel spoke slowly. "For those of you who are local, after I leave, wait for ten minutes before sending a message home. Tell your families to take precautions and avoid public transportation.

"For those who aren't from here, just send a message to your families, tell them you're safe, and remind them to buy masks, disinfectants, bleach, and fever medicine."

Nigel looked at them before continuing, "Remember, only after I've sent my message can you send yours."

"Dr. Alistair, are you trying to take all the responsibility?" the young nurse suddenly shouted. "If you send it before we send ours, it won't count as leaking confidential information on our part, and we won't be responsible!"

Nigel smiled. "You're overthinking. Just remember what I said..."

"Before the dawn comes, there is indeed darkness. But we are doctors, and doctors dare to snatch lives from the hands of death!" the group of young medical students shouted in unison.

Nigel raised his hand but refrained from patting their shoulders. Instead, he smiled and said, "As expected of the ones I've trained. These patients... I'll leave them to you.

Nigel left the hospital without looking back after saying what needed to be said.

Those who stayed behind felt conflicted, but they knew what was more important. The youngest nurse was banned from entering patient rooms and could only stay outside. The others would care for the critically ill patients.

The phrase "medicine has a legacy" took on a tangible form at this moment.

After leaving the hospital, Nigel didn't go home. He didn't know if he had been infected, so he avoided taking the elevator and used the stairs instead, just in case he might unknowingly infect regular patients.

He was indeed the first to send a message, and it was to his wife.

His phone rang almost immediately. "What's going on? Why are you telling me to stay home and not go out? What do you mean even our daughter won't be going to school? What is happening? We've listened to you and have disinfectant at home, haven't we?

"Since you've always said that our daughter has a weak immune system and that Dad and Mom have pre-existing conditions, we've been maintaining good hygiene and washing our hands often."

"Good, you remember what I said." Nigel chuckled softly. "Darling... I know it's been tough on you all these years."

His wife, Elowyn Kelda, sensed something was off. "What's going on? Did something happen at the hospital? Or are you dealing with trouble from the patients' families again?"

"It's nothing. How could there be that much disturbance from patients?" Nigel reassured her. "The hospital is just going to be especially busy for a while. I might need to stay there for another two weeks."

Immediately, Elowyn asked, "Do you need me to bring you some clothes?"

"Don't come to the hospital!"

Nigel reacted so strongly that there was a brief silence on the other end.

"Okay, I won't go," Elowyn replied softly.

Nigel's voice became more urgent. "Make sure you have all the necessary medications at home. It's fine if our daughter misses school for a few days. But if anyone gets sick, avoid contact and wear masks. If possible, don't go outside."

Elowyn wanted to ask more but was interrupted by Nigel, tears in his eyes despite his smile, "Darling, I'm sorry that I couldn't give you what you deserve. Your friends' husbands are all

better than me.

"I'm not good at handling things, I'm clumsy with my words, I don't earn much, and I haven't been promoted much. But you've never seemed to mind. The hospital review... I might disappoint you again."

Elowyn let out a relieved sigh. "I thought something serious had happened. I didn't expect it to be about some promotion. So what if you didn't get it? I know for a fact my husband is the best with his patients.

"We don't need to compare ourselves with others. What's the point of that? You're the best

in my eyes."

Nigel knew Elowyn was trying to comfort him. Whenever he was discouraged about his slow career progress, she was always there to cheer him up.

"Darling, I'm leaving my parents to you..." He knew he couldn't talk any longer without breaking down. "Please don't come to the hospital. Wait for me to come back."

And with that, he ended the call. He had said his part to his family, and now the others could contact their families to let them know they were safe.

However, after making the calls, they didn't really know what else to say other than what Nigel had instructed.

If they said too much, their families would likely notice something was off. Yet, if they said too little, this might be their last opportunity to communicate.

The youngest nurse was the most straightforward and composed among them. She reminded her mother to buy all the necessary supplies, even if they were expensive-money was the least of her concerns now.

However, once she hung up the phone, she stared at it, and her shoulders started trembling slightly. "Mom... I'm scared..."

How could she not be scared? They were humans, too. Watching the patients' deteriorating conditions and hearing about those who were taken away and immediately cremated, left

them shaken.

They saw Nigel leave, completing his final duty for them in his own way.

It wasn't that they didn't sense anything. After all, there had been 12 patients in the ward, but now, only four remained.

The nurses weren't sure what to expect next. Sometimes, it was the unknown that scared people the most.

However, her fear was completely understandable. After all, it was clear that once Nigel left, the place would be entirely turned into an isolation zone.

The cafeteria staff, who used to personally deliver meals to them, no longer did so. Instead,

the food was simply placed outside the elevator on the first floor, and they were expected to pick it up themselves.

It wasn't just one department-the entire building, which had originally been abandoned, was now completely quarantined.

Some had already cracked under the pressure. "I should have left with Dr. Alistair!"

"And how exactly would you leave? Look at the people stationed outside, watching this building. Besides, Dr. Alistair didn't leave because he wanted to. If it were up to him, he would've stayed," another responded.

The two doctors were sharing their thoughts when suddenly, the piercing sound of an alarm

shattered the brief quiet.

"Patient in bed 07! Patient in bed 07 is having difficulty breathing!"

The medical staff, who were eating, immediately sprang to their feet.

Meanwhile, Nigel wore a mask and stuck to areas devoid of people. He couldn't stay in the hospital-not only was it crowded, but Lennon had also made it clear that his presence was unwelcome.

Having sent out a message, he knew it wouldn't be long before Lennon sent someone after him.

Lennon's words echoed in his mind, and he muttered to himself bitterly, "Is it wrong to

trace the source? How can we prevent this or even warn the public without finding Patient Zero? Doesn't everyone deserve the right to know?"

Lost in thought, he found himself at a crosswalk. Without even glancing at the traffic lights,

he stepped forward.

A superbike approached at a steady speed from the side-it was none other than Wynter and

Dalton.

Nigel was so deep in thought that he didn't hear Wynter honking at him and continued walking without a care of the world around him.

Sensing something was wrong, Wynter stopped the bike.

After he successfully crossed the street with a disoriented and dazed appearance, Wynter approached him and asked, "Why aren't you paying attention to the traffic lights?"

Her voice broke through Nigel's daze. He instinctively adjusted his mask and stepped back a

few paces. "I'm sorry," he mumbled before continuing on his way. Dalton, who had also noticed something amiss, suggested, "Let's follow him."

So, they parked the bike and started trailing him.

Wynter was puzzled. "His soul is intact, but the way he's acting... it's like he's lost his spirit."

Determined, she tugged at Dalton's hand and caught up to Nigel. "Excuse me, is something wrong?"

Nigel instinctively stepped back, keeping his distance. "Please don't get too close to me."

The moment he said this, a flicker of realization crossed Wynter's face. "Is it because you're

sick?" Hearing this, Nigel's gaze sharpened. "I'm not sure yet. But to be safe, I think it's better to maintain some distance."

Wynter asked in confusion, "Then why not get checked at a hospital? I can take you there if needed."

The mention of the hospital stirred something deep within Nigel, but he quickly suppressed it. "I am a doctor," he replied, though the pride that once accompanied those words was now tinged with bitterness.

"Why don't we find a place to sit down and talk? Maybe I can help you," Wynter suggested.

Nigel sighed. "No one can help me. You should focus on yourself. Colifernia isn't safe right now." He turned to leave right after his words.

Wynter replied immediately, "I'm the head of Colifernia's Investigation Unit. Why don't we have a talk?"

"No, I might already be infected. It's better if you don't come into contact with me," Nigel said resolutely.

Wynter reached out and placed her fingers on his wrist. "You're not infected. Your pulse is steady. What you need most right now is to talk or to rest."

Hearing this, Nigel's eyes regained some light. He wanted to pour his heart out, but he couldn't go home to Elowyn, fearing he might carry the virus. Hence, hearing that he wasn't infected, he was overjoyed.

"Wait... but how can you be sure I'm not infected?" Nigel had to ask.

Wynter didn't hesitate. "Because I'm also a doctor. Maybe you've heard of me I'm Dr. Miracle."

"You're Dr. Miracle?" Nigel exclaimed. "Dr. Miracle is... a woman?"

He wanted to dismiss her as a fraud, but Wynter's next words rooted him to the spot.

"This illness might be related to animal virus research. That's why I wanted to talk to you first and learn more about the situation."

Hearing this, Nigel's skepticism melted away. Without another word, he followed Wynter into a nearby café.

Once seated, Nigel spoke first. "I'm the deputy director of the Infectious Diseases Department at the hospital near here. We thought it was just a regular cold when the first patient was brought in.

"The symptoms weren't severe he just complained of chest tightness and shortness of breath. But soon, things changed. No matter what medications we used, his condition didn't

improve. "Then came the second patient, the third... and then the 12th. None of them responded to treatment. Even when the fever subsided, their symptoms persisted.

"I suspect human-to-human transmission. As of now, we still haven't identified the pathogen, and patients have already started dying.

"In the meeting with my higher-ups earlier, I suggested regional lockdowns and tracing the outbreak's source. But they dismissed my concerns, claiming I was overreacting. "But I know the truth. The transmission rate could be as high as 80 percent -maybe higher. Even protective gear might not be enough to prevent infection. All I want is for the even

public to have the right to know and to trace this outbreak's source so we can stop it in its tracks."

Wynter's eyes narrowed slightly. She had just sent an order to investigate hospitals and hold meetings with their representatives, yet not a single hospital had disclosed the existence of such an illness.

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Chapter 1722 Tracing Back to the Origin

After Nigel finished speaking, he exhaled deeply and looked at Wynter with pleading eyes." Could I trouble you with something?"

Wynter nodded. "Go ahead."



"You're Dr. Miracle. Could I ask you to visit the hospital and take a look at the patients? I know I'm asking a lot, especially since there's a real risk of infection. But despite all our efforts, we haven't made any progress, and the patients' conditions are worsening.

"It's heartbreaking to see them suffer. And if this illness isn't brought under control, the consequences will be unimaginable.

"Many of these patients are just regular people like me. I come from an ordinary family, and I know that all people like us want is to live a peaceful life, free of illness and hardship.

"This disease is exhausting to endure. If I could, I would stay at the hospital myself."

Hearing this, Wynter's gaze softened with admiration. Nigel really did see his patients as more than just a mere job.

"This isn't trouble at all. I'm here precisely to see the patients at your hospital," Wynter said resolutely.

Nigel stood up and bowed deeply. "Thank you!"

Wynter quickly helped him up. "We share the same goal in this. Now, tell me more about the patients' conditions."

Once seated again, he started explaining, "Initially, infected patients show no obvious symptoms. A few days later, they develop high fever, extreme fatigue, and, in severe cases, difficulty breathing.

"Medication and IV fluids can provide temporary relief, but they don't cure the illness. Also, the transmission rate is incredibly high. It can spread through the air, saliva, and even skin contact."

Wynter tapped lightly on the table, deep in thought. The conditions Nigel mentioned were all ones she had encountered before, but never in combination. Any one of these on its own would cause significant discomfort, let alone all of them combined.

Nigel added, "The disease appears to affect children and older adults the most. Younger people with stronger immune systems don't seem to show as severe symptoms."

Wynter nodded before asking, "Is there a Patient Zero?"

Nigel nodded, further affirming his belief that Wynter truly was Dr. Miracle. After all, if it had been anyone else, they would have kept their distance the moment they suspected he might be carrying an infectious disease.

Yet, Wynter had checked his pulse without hesitation. Moreover, she was the first to ask about a Patient Zero a detail no one else had thought to address.

Nigel was visibly moved. "Patient Zero... Based on my assessment, he is a middle-aged man in Bed 05. He was the first to come to the hospital. In fact, he came twice. It was only during his second visit that I recommended hospitalization. His initial symptoms seemed to be just a common fever."

"So, he's still in the hospital now, right?" Wynter asked. Nigel froze briefly before shaking his head. "He passed away..."

Wynter paused. "Do you still remember his basic information?"

"Of course," Nigel replied. As a diligent doctor, he had clear memories of the patients he treated. "He was 45 years old, had slightly high blood pressure, and led a busy life with little sleep. He was prone to colds and had a history of pharyngitis."

"Every time he came to the hospital, he'd be dressed in a sweat-soaked undershirt, with a small pouch slung around his waist."

Wynter immediately deduced, "He wasn't an office worker."

"No, he wasn't. He was a small trader," Nigel confirmed. "He dealt with aquatic animals and wasn't a local."

Aquatic animals? Wynter suddenly snapped her head up.

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Chapter 1723 Who Is She

Wynter seized on a key phrase. "How did you know he dealt with aquatic animals?"

"He always smelled like fish. One day during my rounds, I asked him about it," Nigel replied, confused. "Is there a problem with that?"

Wynter fixed her gaze on him, seriousness etched across her face. "This is critical. Dr. Alistair, I need you to recall-where exactly did he sell those aquatic animals? Where does he live?"

"His home? The address he provided was... a..." Nigel racked his brain, and then suddenly exclaimed, "It was a local farmers' market! Just the one nearby. I remember now! He mentioned delivering aquatic animals there things like shrimp and fish."

The moment Wynter heard the words "farmers' market", her expression shifted sharply. "Hold on a second,"

She didn't hesitate and quickly dialed a number.

This wasn't a call to Colifernia's local officials. Instead, it went straight to the top. After all, Special Unit 001's line was originally established for military coordination.

The person answering her call was none other than Jackson, who was stationed in Kingbourne.

Jackson didn't waste time with pleasantries. The fact that Wynter chose to call this number meant the situation was dire. Hence, as soon as he saw her name, he halted the meeting he was in.

Wynter's voice was steady as she began, "Mr. Munn Senior, I suspect a large-scale pandemic may occur in Colifernia. This situation was reported earlier, but there's been no follow-up from local hospitals.

"From the current signs, the outbreak might already be underway, possibly starting five days ago or even earlier. I need a full lockdown of Colifernia and an immediate dispatch of professional medical personnel, preferably military doctors."

Jackson's frown deepened as he listened. "Understood. I'll make the arrangements immediately."

Just as Wynter was about to end the call, Jackson stopped her with a question. "Can it be contained?"

Wynter glanced at Nigel across the table before replying, "It's unclear at this stage."

Jackson was worried, given that he couldn't be there. "Wynter, we are not professionals. The safety of Colifernia's people rests in your hands. If-

Not wanting him to finish the grim sentence, Wynter interjected firmly, "If it truly gets out of hand, then we lock down the city."

Jackson sighed heavily, but on the other end of the line, Wynter's eyes were resolute. "It won't come to that. Rest assured."

Though he knew her courage was unshakable, Jackson couldn't help but add before hanging up, "Make sure you stay protected. Take care of yourself, Wynter!"

"Alright," Wynter reassured him.

After hanging up Jackson's call, Wynter immediately posted a members-only message on the dark web.

"Anyone near Colifernia, drop whatever you're currently working on and listen carefully. Colifernia needs you. Be forewarned-this time, we're dealing with an invisible, untouchable virus that could threaten lives.

"The Special Unit has always operated on a voluntary basis. If you're willing, head to Colifernia's farmers' market on the west and assist in its complete lockdown and containment. I need a full trace of everyone connected to the market within half a day.

"For those who want to join, simply signal with a light on the dark web."

Nigel overheard her words. Although he didn't understand what the dark web was, he recognized the weight of her statement. Even in such a dangerous situation, she left the choice to the individuals, prioritizing their health and safety.

What he didn't expect was the immediate response.

Wynter's screen lit up almost entirely. People who had long retired from the team, and even those who hadn't officially joined but had exceptional skills, all signaled their willingness to help.

And it all came down to one sentence. "Colifernia needs you."

In their everyday lives, these people might seem no different from any ordinary citizen, but no one loved this land more than they did. True heroism was often found in those who stepped forward when everyone else stepped away.

"If Dr. Miracle needs me, I want to go back to the hospital, too-that's my battlefield!" Nigel's chest burned with determination. The hopelessness that had weighed on him was replaced with renewed strength.

This wasn't a solitary fight. There was an entire group of people willing to make the same choice as him.

Wynter glanced out of the window, staring at the sky that had darkened. "With the people's will on our side, we can defy even the heavens."

Dalton had been standing beside her the whole time. He understood what weighed on her mind. "Every individual is different. In every field, there are those who bear the

heavyweights, and there are also those who simply enjoy the ride."

Wynter's heart simmered with frustration as she listened to Nigel's earlier words.

Some people worked tirelessly and selflessly to protect this land. While others, driven by personal ambition, chose to conceal the truth-even at the cost of countless lives-just to avoid facing repercussions.

Clenching her fist, Wynter said resolutely, "Let's go. It's time to confront those who are still enjoying their comforts."

In a conference room, the hospital's department heads had all gathered, their expressions a mix of confusion. Most of them were usually swamped with work, yet here they were, summoned for an unclear purpose.

"Do you have any idea who called us all together? It feels like someone's just looking for trouble," one of them remarked.

"I heard someone from higher up is visiting Colifernia for an inspection. It's probably just another show like before," another replied dismissively.

"Whatever it is, we'll just stick to the agreed narrative. Although there's a recent spike in infectious diseases, we can't disclose anything until we fully understand the pathogen. If panic breaks out, we'll all be held accountable," someone added.

"Exactly. Remember the meeting last time? That deputy director, Nigel Alistair, really doesn't know when to keep quiet. He kept insisting on tracing the source and locking down areas. All it did was embarrass the department heads."

"In my department, the symptoms are mostly fever, coughing, and shortness of breath. Sure, it's highly contagious, but we've isolated the patients, so it's manageable for now," another chimed in.

"It's bizarre, though. We've run every test and investigation we can think of, but nothing's come up."

"Well, the fortune teller is supposed to arrive today. Maybe they can help us figure something out..."

Their words sounded ridiculous, but it was reality. They were out of answers and growing increasingly anxious. They had to find a solution. Maybe this really had something to do with fortune-telling.

Hence, the first thing Wynter saw when she entered the hospital was everyone acting furtively, scurrying as if heading somewhere.

At this moment, Nigel, still wearing his mask, spoke up. "They're all heading toward the isolation ward. Could something have happened?"

Feeling uneasy, he stopped a passing nurse. "What's going on here?"

The nurse recognized him and immediately asked, "Dr. Alistair, why are you back? Didn't the director suspend you?"

"I came back to grab some things. What's happening up ahead?" Nigel pressed urgently.

The nurse clearly treated the situation as gossip. "Oh, the director brought in a fortune teller from Mt. Dragon. Apparently, the fortune teller claims there's a spirit in the hospital. They've started performing a cleansing ritual, and everyone's rushing to see it."

Hearing this, Wynter scoffed coldly. "A cultivator from Mt. Dragon? What's he doing in a hospital? These are diseases, not hauntings."

The nurse nodded in agreement. "True, but it's the director's decision. Dr. Alistair, is this your friend?"

Nigel nodded, his expression darkening. "Absurd! Cleansing rituals in a hospital? This is beyond ridiculous!"

"Dr. Alistair, you probably shouldn't say that aloud later. Have you heard of the Colifernia Chamber of Commerce?"

"The hospital's largest shareholder is Mr. Tarvin from that chamber, and he heard about the patients under your care and decided this must be the work of evil spirits. That's why he invited the fortune teller from Mt. Dragon."

Rohan, again? Wynter raised an eyebrow but didn't stop walking. She asked, "So, is this hospital basically a private property?"

The nurse nodded.

When Wynter walked into the scene, the first thing that greeted her was the sight of

Wolstan. He was chanting incantations with great fervor, pacing back and forth, as if performing a ritual.

Around him was a crowd of onlookers, including patients and hospital staff.

Of course, this farcical scene wouldn't have been possible without Rohan, the hospital's major shareholder, standing by in support.

Wynter completely ignored Wolstan entirely, intending to head inside to check on the patients.

However, Wolstan spotted her immediately and called out, "It's you! The one who disrespected Mt. Dragon at the farmers' market!"

Wynter didn't even bother acknowledging him. "Don't test my patience right now unless you want Mt. Dragon's reputation to crumble because of you," she said as she walked past him.

Wolstan was furious. "You! Just you wait! You'll regret crossing me once I'm done with this

ritual!" "There's no need to wait. I'll deal with you now on Mr. Stavius' behalf." Wynter lifted her hand, and a lucky token flew straight at his face.

Wolstan's expression changed drastically. "You-You have the Epoch Collection?"

Wynter didn't just have the Epoch Collection. She summoned her Soul Commanding Badge, transforming it into a sword, slashing down directly at the ritual platform.

Wolstan stumbled back several steps in fear. "You're a cultivator, too!"

Wynter didn't waste her words. She pressed the sword spirit to his neck, her gaze dark. "Now, tell me what 'evil spirit' are you trying to exorcise here?"

Wolstan was genuinely terrified. The onlookers couldn't see it, but he could. There was a swarm of wraith and malevolent spirits that had suddenly appeared behind Wynter. Each one of them was far beyond his ability to handle.

"Fellow cultivator, it's a misunderstanding! Just a misunderstanding!" he stammered, frantically trying to summon reinforcements.

Bitting his finger, he drew a blood charm and silently chanted a summoning spell three times. A figure appeared-one of the fearsome Guardian Souls, its presence both menacing and oppressive.

Rohan's eyes lit up with excitement. "As expected of a fortune teller I invited from Mt. Dragon! They can truly summon deities!"

But the Guardian Soul barely had time to finish its formal greeting, "Mortal, why have you summoned-" before its gaze inadvertently landed on Dalton in the corner.

Dressed sharply in a tailored suit, with gold-rimmed glasses that glinted faintly, Dalton pushed up his glasses ever so slightly.

But that was more than enough for the Guardian Soul to disappear in an instant in fear.

This was unlike any scenario Wolston had ever experienced. He stood there, dumbfounded.

In the past, the Guardian Soul he summoned would patiently ask about the situation and help him deal with any malevolent spirits. But why did it seem afraid this time? Refusing to give up, Wolstan attempted to summon another. Yet, this time, not a single one dared to appear.

Down below, the underworld deities were muttering nervously amongst themselves. They couldn't believe Wolston was trying to drag them into a fight with their ancestors. He must be out of his mind!

Seeing Wolstan's futile efforts, Wynter smirked faintly. With a swift strike of her sword spirit, his robe was sliced apart.

"Go back and tell Kaspar that if everyone from Mt. Dragon is like you, I'll come over and teach even him a lesson."

Rohan, standing nearby, was furious at the scene. "Do you think this is some kind of playground? How dare you act so-"

Before he could finish, Wynter flicked a silver needle, precisely hitting one of his acupoints.

"I don't have time to deal with you now. But mark my words-I said 'for now,'" Wynter said coldly. With that, she looked over at the people standing nearby. "Where are the hospital directors?" No one dared to challenge her anymore. They all pointed toward the office building.

Inside, the hospital directors were still in a heated discussion about how to evade responsibility. That was when the door swung open, and Wynter and Dalton stepped into the room.

All of them looked over, and one of the directors spoke up. "Did you come to the wrong place? This is a meeting for hospital directors. How did irrelevant personnel get in here? Where's security?"



Calm and composed, Wynter walked straight to the head of the table. As she scanned the room filled with doctors in lab coats and masks, she spoke with an icy tone. "I'm the one hosting this meeting."

"Young lady, you can't just say whatever you want. You're about the same age as my daughter. How could you possibly be the leader sent here for inspection?"

Laughter rippled through the room, but it came to an abrupt halt as Wynter took out a badge and threw it onto the table.

The closest to the badge leaned in to take a look. One glance was enough to make his face turn pale. "She... She is..."

The others, sensing something was off, moved closer to inspect the badge. Silence immediately fell over the room like a heavy shroud.

Wynter calmly retrieved her credentials and continued, "Can someone report to me if there have been any special cases or patients in Colifernia recently?"

The room remained frozen for a moment before a chorus of synchronized responses followed. "No."

Her expression didn't waver. "Where are the directors for the Summit, Greenfield, and Starlight Hospitals of Colifernia?"

The mentioned directors stiffened but quickly stood up.

Wynter approached Jay Ellis, the Summit Hospital's director. "I've heard your hospital has been especially busy lately."

Jay's face drained of color, but he forced a nervous laugh and spoke as he rubbed his hands together nervously. "Busy hospitals are the norm. We have patients seeking treatment and being admitted daily. If not for this meeting, I wouldn't even have time to attend."

Next, she moved toward the Greenfield Hospital's director, Dex Dawson. "What about you, Mr. Dawson?"

Dex immediately spoke up. "Lately, we've had an increase in patients, but that only shows how dedicated we are to serving the people."

Before Wynter could even reach the Starlight Hospital's director, Deshan Evans, he stood up and blurted, "Starlight Hospital hasn't been too busy recently. It's a good sign that the public's health is improving, and I couldn't be happier about that!"

The three directors' bureaucratic answers were airtight and polished. However, Wynter could barely suppress her anger now. She looked over at Jay again. "Are you sure that there aren't any special cases?"

Jay responded immediately, "I'm sure! There are no special cases." Wynter's eyes narrowed at his answer. She could barely contain the fury burning in her eyes.

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### Chapter 1724 Wynter's Purpose

"Nigel is the deputy director of your hospital's Infectious Diseases Department, right?"

Wynter's question hit Jay like a thunderclap. After all, he had just forced Nigel out of the hospital after a heated meeting. The fact that Wynter brought Nigel up made Jay realize the situation was spiraling out of control.

Before he could respond, Wynter continued, "Nigel has already told me everything."

Wynter's sharp gaze swept across the room as she addressed everyone. "Hospitals are places for saving lives. You, as this institution's head, choose not to solve the issue but to get rid of a good doctor who raised valid concerns.

"When a disease arises, you try to bury it instead of confronting it. Do I need to remind you of your duties? Do you still deserve to be called medical professionals?"

Her words left the room in stunned silence. Not a single person dared to make a sound.

"If this matter is properly handled, you may avoid consequences. But if the pandemic spirals out of control, the price you pay will not be as simple as legal repercussions," Wynter warned.

Jay, who was still attempting to have the last say, retorted, "The decision to have Nigel take a break wasn't solely mine. It was a directive from higher-ups. Besides, I think Nigel might have exaggerated the situation's severity. The disease isn't that critical."

Wynter turned to look at him. "So, by your logic, is it not critical until it spreads across the entire country? Excellent logic. Just excellent."

Then, looking out the door, she raised her voice. "Bring Nigel in here."

Panic flickered across Jay's face the moment he heard Nigel's name. After all, he knew too much. If he decided to reveal the truth, the entire Colifernia would be thrown into chaos.

The door opened, and Nigel entered, wearing a face mask.

Despite the mask, Jay immediately recognized him. Forcing a smile, he said, "Nigel, didn't I tell you to rest at home for a few days? Why are you back?"

Then, he quickly walked over to Nigel, leaning in and whispering into his ear, "Are you trying to get us all killed?"

Nigel's calm demeanor didn't waver as he quietly replied, "I am merely doing what a doctor should do. Mr. Ellis, I suggest you reflect on your actions."

Wynter gestured for Nigel to come forward. "Dr. Alistair, recount everything you know and have experienced, down to the smallest detail. Don't leave out a single thing."

Nigel began to speak, retelling every detail he had shared with Wynter at the café. Not a single word was omitted. As the story unfolded, Jay's expression darkened, his gaze fixed on

Nigel as if he wanted to destroy him.

When Nigel finished, Wynter looked at Jay with an impassive expression. "Mr. Ellis, do I really need to spell out the consequences of withholding such critical information?"

"You act as if it's nothing when the situation is already this dire, all while delivering hollow platitudes. How do you expect anyone to trust a hospital with how you're acting? Playing bureaucratic games... Do you take me as a fool?"

Jay was still desperate to defend himself. "But we haven't even confirmed the pathogen yet! Making hasty announcements will only cause unnecessary panic. And as for a regional lockdown, the higher-ups wouldn't approve of it!"

"Oh? Higher-ups? Which ones are you referring to?" Wynter asked, her tone cool and detached.

Jay immediately pulled out the Deputy Minister's name, confident in his ability to leverage authority, hoping to crush any resistance from Wynter. "You've probably met Mr. Killis from the Epidemic Prevention Department before you came."

"I haven't met him yet. But from the sound of it, I think it's time I did."

Without hesitation, she pulled out her phone and made a call. "Bring me Mr. Killis from the Epidemic Prevention Department."

"Understood," came the crisp response from the other end.

The entire room exchanged uneasy glances, and Jay's confidence wavered.

Wynter smirked faintly and sat down at the center of the conference table, flipping through the stack of documents.

The silence in the room was deafening, and some attendees could be seen nervously wiping sweat from their foreheads. But, they wondered if she really could summon Zayn Killis with just one phone call.

Just as everyone was questioning what was happening, the door opened.

The people who entered were not dressed in the standard disciplinary inspection uniforms but wore black outer jackets with tactical combat gear underneath. This wasn't just a routine investigation this was military enforcement.

The so-called Deputy Minister, Zayn, was dragged in with a gun pressed against his back, his legs long given out.

Wynter, never one to waste words, waited for the door to close before placing a stack of documents into Zayn's trembling hands. "Mr. Killis, I've heard so much about you.

"Not at all, I... I..." Zayn stammered, his legs trembling violently.

Wynter continued calmly, "It wasn't easy to catch you. I understand you were already arranging for your daughter to study abroad last month.

"And today, conveniently, you had official business scheduled in Havenia. Meanwhile, your

wife, daughter, and mother were already heading to the airport."

In this city, where lives were at stake, some people were desperately trying to escape, while others were choosing to stand and fight.

Those at the top of the power hierarchy always had access to the best resources. They received information far earlier and faster than ordinary citizens.

Sometimes, it was

irresponsibility that caused devastating harm to the general public in the first place. And when disaster struck, they were the first to flee. This inherent injustice

was glaring.

"Judging by how carefully you've arranged your family's departure, it's clear that you are a meticulous and well-planned individual, Mr. Killis," Wynter said in an unhurried tone.

This left everyone in the room confused. Even Zayn himself was bewildered. Was she complimenting him?

But Wynter's next words dragged him straight into the abyss. "Since you're so organized, it's time to put that skill to good use. You'll accompany me to the quarantine ward. Together, we'll oversee the arrangements for the patients' follow-up care."

Zayn's paled in an instant. He would have preferred interrogation or even imprisonment over this.

"No, no! I'm not suited for this kind of work! I truly made a mistake! I'll accept any investigation and any punishment the authorities decide." He hurriedly refused.

Wynter chuckled lightly. "They are busy. For now, focus on your work. You don't have to worry about your family. I had a chat with customs last month. I advised them to delay any travel for the officials' family members during this uncertain period in Colifernia.

"Your family's departure has been postponed. After all, leaving you here alone would only make them worried."

Zayn's face, pale before, was now completely ashen. Panic set in as he realized Wynter wasn't bluffing.

She had somehow anticipated his plans and acted well in advance. He couldn't fathom the level of control she wielded. He had never encountered such a situation before!

Yet, the gun still pressed against his back reminded him that this was no ordinary situation.

Standing to the side, Jay genuinely felt like the sky was crumbling down. He never imagined Wynter would be so decisive and forceful.

They couldn't even begin to grasp the extent of her authority. How could she summon Zayn with just a word? And using military enforcement, no less!

Then, Wynter turned her attention to him. "Mr. Ellis, since you've always been such a great team player with Mr. Killis, I'm sure you'll make an excellent partner in the quarantine ward

as well. You're coming with us."

Jay froze, panic etched on his face. He began to plead desperately, "No, I won't go! If I stay in there too long, I'll die! I'm not going!"

"Didn't you just say the situation wasn't that serious?" Wynter asked before continuing with a low voice, "Mr. Ellis, you seem to have misunderstood. I wasn't asking for your opinion. Take him away."

Her ruthlessness was undeniable, but it was also incredibly effective. The more Jay screamed and resisted, the more Wynter's authority over the room solidified.

Those who had initially dismissed her as a young woman now had entirely different expressions. They had dealt with countless inspections before, but never had they encountered anything like this.

"Everything discussed in this meeting room today is to remain strictly confidential," Wynter commanded, tapping lightly on the table. "Now, let's discuss how to minimize the risks effectively..."

The meeting room now dove into the real agenda.

Downstairs, Rohan, who had just been freed from the acupuncture seal, was completely unaware of the storm brewing above. All he knew was that Wynter had been blatantly disrespectful to him multiple times in public.

"I'll make sure this brat from the Quinnell family learns what happens when someone crosses me!" he growled.

His face twisted with anger as he dialed a number. "Go stir up some trouble at the farmers'

market! What are you afraid of? Don't worry about it. There will be no problems with the scions backing our Chamber of Commerce."

The scions Rohan referred to were part of society's upper echelon. In this circle, status often leaned heavily on political backgrounds paired with overseas capital.

Many officials' and elites' children were sent abroad for schooling, usually during high school or college. Common destinations included Havenia or Emstia, tying their educational paths closely to their parents' influence.

Of course, this wasn't to say that wealth itself was inherently bad-after all, it only amplified the personality traits people possessed. However, issues inevitably arose when values and discipline were neglected.

Among these scions, one prominent figure was currently being held at the airport-with both her luggage and herself detained.

"Why? You'd better give me an explanation! Call your supervisor right now!" Joey Killis demanded, her tone indignant.

The customs officer maintained their professionalism. "We've received orders that you are

temporarily prohibited from leaving the country. Please put down your phone and stop recording."

"Why can't I record? Do you even know who my dad is? How dare you stop me?"

She pointed at the officer's face. "Someone like you, who's at the bottom of the ladder, doesn't even get to speak to someone like me on a normal day. This is your last warning-let me through, or I'll make sure you lose your job!"

The officer calmly warned her, "If you persist, this will be considered an obstruction of public safety-"

"Obstruction of public safety?" Joey slammed her bag onto the counter. "So what if I am? Do

you know how many followers I have online? Do you even know what my family does? I travel abroad every month, and you've never stopped me before. Why now?"

She spoke in a mix of Cascadian and Emstian. Her voice was both soft and delicate, giving the appearance of a sweet, innocent girl. Yet, her words and actions were the complete opposite, leaving everyone present watching in stunned silence.

Her mother, Jennifer Lilth stepped in, trying to pacify her. "Joey, don't be so stubborn."

However, Joey refused to listen.

At that moment, uniformed personnel arrived on the scene. Jennifer tried to smooth things over. "My daughter is still young and emotional, but she hasn't done anything wrong. Don't you think you owe us an explanation for detaining us like this? My husband is a government official-you should reach out to him first."

Her words reflected her sense of superiority, as if Joey's behavior was excusable because of

her youth and "poor mood". Her assumption was simple. Once customs contacted Zayn, everything would be resolved.

However, her lack of awareness revealed her ignorance. As a Deputy Minister's wife, being

detained at customs was already a glaring red flag. It was obvious something was amiss at home. Yet, she remained oblivious, her arrogance undiminished.

Meanwhile, Joey was still smug. She was giggling as she pulled out her phone and posted a

video on TikTok

The caption read, "I was so happy to go on a trip with Mommy. But on the way, we ran into a

few barking dogs. So annoying!"

The video showed her in a perfectly styled outfit, radiating an air of charm and mischief, like

a spoiled princess.

"What kind of dogs dare bark at our princess?"

"Is this how rich people live? Traveling abroad every month? I'm so jealous!"

"Jojo is adorable! Does your family need a maid? I want to be friends with you!"

The people online, unaware of the full context, were quick to idolize her. It was, after all, human nature to admire wealth and power, especially when life feels unfair.

But the reality was much darker. Some of these people's privileges and entitlement came at

the expense of ordinary people's rights, exploiting their position to enjoy luxuries they



didn't deserve.

"We've already contacted him. You are now formally detained on charges of public safety obstruction," the uniform personnel commanded, direct and unyielding. Both Jennifer and Joey were completely dumbfounded.

And this was the purpose of Wynter's decisions.

In the meeting room, Wynter addressed Nigel, "You will continue working in the hospital. If

you encounter any issues, you can report them directly to me.

"My only request is that you do everything possible to treat every patient while ensuring your own safety. Spread my message to everyone."

She then turned to the other hospital directors in the room. "All other hospitals must also operate under the same principle. You will be held accountable if I discover any misconduct. "All other directors may leave except for the Willowbrook Medical Center's director." As the others left, Drexel Asquith, the Willowbrook Medical Center's director remained. He

was unsure of why Wynter had held him back, but he could sense that it must be something serious.

Wynter began slowly, "Dave Cowell works at your hospital, correct?" Drexel nodded. "Yes, he's the head of the Infectious Diseases Department." Wynter's expression grew thoughtful. "I've heard that while other hospitals are struggling

with cases of this infectious disease, your hospital has managed to avoid having a single patient." Drexel responded immediately, "We recently brought in a new team of department heads, including some foreign experts. Their methods are incredibly advanced.

"Diseases that are rare and complex for most doctors are like the common cold to them.

They diagnose and treat patients almost instantly. People call them miracle workers." Wynter nodded, seemingly understanding. "Wait for me here. In ten minutes, I'll go with you to Willowbrook Medical Center."

In her mind, Wynter had already begun forming plans and strategies. The situation in Colifernia was deteriorating rapidly, but Willowbrook Medical Center's anomaly was

striking.

If not for the information Lancelot sent her confirming that Dave was working there, she might not have connected the dots.

Meanwhile, Nigel, now fully suited in protective gear, re-entered the hospital. His appearance drew attention from everyone. Even through the layers of his gear, his colleagues could feel his determination and resolve.

He spoke steadily. "Thank you for your hard work. This outbreak is something we must face

together. We have to do everything in our power to ensure every patient's safety and protect ourselves as well."

"Without the country, there's no home. Let's follow Dr. Alistair and fight through this outbreak together!"

"I feel energized now that Dr. Alistair is back!"

The team placed their hands together in solidarity, their voices uniting in a chant of hope and determination.

"Let's go!"

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

Chapter 1725 You're Fired

The residents of the farmers' market were alarmed by its sudden closure, fearing the loss of their livelihood. Rohan believed it was the perfect opportunity to incite unrest.

"I don't understand. Why are they stopping us from doing business?" a vendor questioned.

"Exactly! It was all fine until they shut down the market. How am I supposed to provide for my family now?" another huffed.

Those already harboring complaints were now further incensed by the provocation. Though they were initially calm, some now attempted to tear down the barricade tape to enter.

Rohan watched from the sidelines with a triumphant smirk. Dressed in a sleek suit, he spoke with a righteous air, as though standing up for the vendors. "Who do the Quinnells think they are, keeping us locked down like this?

"Who sent you here? Do you even have the authority to enforce this? I haven't heard a word from Mr. Wyncall at the Industry and Commerce Bureau."

Standing before him, Garret Moland blocked Rohan's path to the farmers' market. Inside, workers in protective suits were disinfecting the area, while specialists collected samples of the virus.

While the initial sample results indicated nothing unusual at the farmers' market, the first case of infection came from the driver who delivered aquatic animals there.

With no knowledge of the driver's other routes, they were left to consider the farmers' market as the virus' potential source. Even if it might not have been the virus' origin, anyone who had come into contact with the driver was likely infected.

Hence, Wynter swiftly ordered a lockdown of the farmers' market upon hearing Nigel's account. Each resident was placed under quarantine, and medical professionals went door to door to collect samples for testing.

Eager to stir trouble, Rohan had planned to record a video that would spark a backlash against the Quinnell Group. He hadn't expected to be stopped at the entrance, leaving him unaware of what was unfolding inside. All he could do was stoke the fire from the outside.

At the same time, his disdain for Garret grew as he thought of the latter as just an ordinary citizen daring to stand his way.

Rohan declared recklessly, "Let's storm in! If anything goes wrong, Mr. Wyncall and Mr. Camburn will handle it!"

Murdo Camburn was the chief officer in charge of the area. Despite his own authority, he had to show deference to Rohan, the Colifernia Chamber of Commerce's head. Moreover, several development projects relied on Rohan's support, which fueled his brazenness.

Wolstan, who had once mirrored Rohan's haughtiness, now wore an unreadable expression. He couldn't fathom why the Soul Guardian he had summoned earlier had refused to help or

even listen to his request.

As if that wasn't enough, the artifact Alban had given him had shattered, leaving Wolstan at a loss for how to explain his error to his mentor.

Just who on earth was Wynter, and why did malevolent spirits surround her? Those questions kept running in Wolstan's mind. But he didn't dare to bring them up to Rohan, lest he would be seen as incompetent.

Having grown used to admiration and flattery, Wolstan had no intention of returning to being a nobody. Normally, he would've seen Rohan's downfall coming. However, he had been so wrapped up in his own concerns that he failed to realize that Rohan's reckless behavior was costing him his position.

No one had ever been bold enough to trespass the isolation zone, yet Rohan audaciously suggested such an act, oblivious to the riot he was inciting.

Garret barely budged an inch as he stopped Rohan's advance. The crowd attempted to force their way into the market but failed to break through.

Seeing that, Rohan purposely fell to the ground and cried, "How unjust! The farmers' market belongs to us Colifernians, but the Quinnell Group shut it down as soon as they arrived! What are the residents supposed to do now?"

"As the Colifernia Chamber of Commerce's head, I came to inspect the situation, but they pushed me to the ground!"

When Rohan started crying, his subordinate started recording the scene. Facing the camera, Rohan sniffed and continued, "You call the Quinnells benevolent, but it's all just a show!"

Garret watched the farce with a frown. It appeared Rohan wasn't fully aware of who he was messing with.

Upon hearing the commotion, Wolstan rushed over to find Rohan sitting on the ground. He noticed an ominous air around Rohan and performed a swift divination. Shocked by the result, he quickly helped Rohan to his feet.

"We have to leave, Mr. Tarvin. I fear something bad may happen if we stay any longer," Wolstan warned.

Rohan simply dismissed his concerns. "You're worrying too much, Mr. Wingfield. This is Colifernia. If there's something I can't handle, someone else will take care of it for me. I wouldn't have made it this far without such connections.

"Besides, what can possibly go wrong? It's not like the Quinnells will put a hit on me, right?"

Though Wolstan wished to tell him the truth, he was afraid of invoking heavenly retribution. He met Rohan's gaze and stated sternly, "It's for your sake, Mr. Tarvin. I can't say more. Some secrets must remain hidden."

Rohan merely patted Wolstan on the shoulder and said, "You're overthinking it, Mr. Wingfield. I'll take you out for some fun once this is settled."

He then ordered his subordinate to upload the video, but Garret swiftly snatched the phone

away.

"I shouldn't be bothered, but do you even understand what an isolation zone is? If you try to bypass me, there will be serious consequences," Garret warned.

Infuriated by his words, Rohan shot back, "Oh, really? We're living in a society bound by laws, yet you dare to threaten me like this.

"Look here, I'm a Cascadian Asmarian. As a foreign investor, I'm entitled to certain privileges, but you choose to show me disrespect. Just you wait-I'm calling Mr. Wyncall right now."

With that, he took out his phone and dialed a number. The line indicated that Ralph Wyncall was unavailable. But even after several attempts, Ralph still hadn't responded.

Little did Rohan know that the scions he assumed to be untouchable had been barred from leaving the country. As for Ralph, he had been taken away from the meeting half an hour ago and was on his way to the farmers' market.

Drenched in cold sweat, Ralph was still oblivious to the unfolding events and kept questioning, "Who are you? Where are you taking me? Who gave you the right to do so?"

The one escorting him whispered into his ear, "We're from the Special Unit. Does that ring a

bell?"

Hearing that, Ralph instantly felt weak in his knees. He had heard of the Special Unit but never encountered them before. After all, he had been advised not to get involved with them, or it could lead to his end.

Meanwhile, Garret was informed via the walkie-talkie that the sampling was complete, but the people were to remain in isolation. He swiftly ordered someone to weld an iron gate, completely sealing off the entrance.

Though Rohan was eager to cause trouble, he didn't expect such an outcome and attempted to stop them. "Taking control of the market is one thing, but sealing off the entrance, too?

You're really-"

Before he could finish his words, Murdo arrived in full uniform. Though, he was escorted by a soldier who easily restrained him with one hand. Stunned, Rohan attempted to ask questions, but Murdo stopped him.

Unfortunately, Rohan failed to comprehend Murdo's intention. Being a repatriate, he overlooked one thing-the shift to black combat uniforms was a clear sign that the operation was no longer under normal officials' control. Instead, it was now in the military's hands.

But Rohan, having enjoyed his privileges as a repatriate businessman, failed to think on that scale. He remained clinging onto his influence and retorted haughtily, "What's there to fear? Try messing with me, and I'll pull my investments out of Colifernia immediately!" "Please do so, then," a voice replied. It was Lucas, who was supposed to be in Hawford. By all rights, he wasn't in charge of Colifernia nor was he expected to be there. However, there had been a special case.

The higher-ups had ordered the relevant departments to prioritize disease prevention and control, but no one anticipated the duplicity. Hence, Wynter directly appealed to the top authorities and requested military intervention.

In other words, the officials in charge of the relevant departments weren't entirely innocent.

In fact, Colifernia's mayor had already been taken in for questioning.

Since the operation was executed swiftly with utmost secrecy, those of the lower rankings were all caught off guard.

Still wrapped in his delusions, Rohan believed he was entitled to special treatment as a foreign investor.

When he noticed Lucas, he swiftly mocked him in a mix of languages. "And who the hell are

you? Do you have any idea how much profit and job opportunities I bring to this city every month?

"Even your director wouldn't dare to speak to me like that. Can you handle the consequences if I pull my investments?"

Lucas silently lifted his gaze, and his subordinates moved to shove Ralph to the ground.

Only then did Rohan sense something was wrong.

Glancing at the trembling Ralph, Lucas softly remarked, "To think you would allow such a businessman to remain in Colifernia. Aren't you kind, Mr. Wyncall?"

"I can explain, Mr. Keller. It's true that the city needs development and economic growth, but what Mr. Tarvin claims is simply his own opinion. We won't allow anyone to impose their own agenda."

Ralph scrambled to explain, though his nervous expression hinted that he had received benefits under questionable circumstances.

Lucas merely ignored Ralph as he strode toward the confused Rohan. "Everyone knows that

Cascadia has a large market share, and we always welcome global investors to Colifernia. Our trade's core principle is clear and simple-everyone in Cascadia must respect its laws. "Mr. Tarvin, even if you don't pull out your investments, you'll still be expelled from the

country. As for your company, that's up to your superiors. If they share your views, I'm sorry to say that they won't be welcomed here, either. You can pass that message along, but I think they'll be coming for you instead."

Rohan was taken aback by Lucas' declaration. No one had ever dared to speak to him like that. Even Colifernia's mayor had offered him privileges to make him stay. But when he noticed Ralph's ashen face, he realized that Lucas was no ordinary figure. Most foreign companies typically operated their headquarters overseas. As the one

overseeing businesses in Cascadia, Rohan knew he would face serious consequences if he mismanaged things.

Yet, his poor grasp of Cascadian kept him from fully understanding the implications of Lucas 'message. If he were expelled, he would lose his position as the Colifernia Chamber of

Commerce's head.

Before he could comprehend Lucas' words, he received a call from his direct superior at the

headquarters.

"Rohan, you idiot! How many times have I warned you not to disrespect the Cascadian militaries or the laws? Have you ever listened to what I said? You're such a moron! You're fired!" the superior bellowed.

Rohan was left in stunned silence. He had always prided himself on building strong connections with local officials, but that didn't seem to work out now.

He had merely intended to cause trouble for the Quinnells, yet somehow, things had spiraled

out of control. Moreover, who on earth was Lucas?

When Lucas prepared to leave, Rohan hurried after him and desperately pleaded, "It's all a

misunderstanding, sir! Really!"

Lucas didn't bother to spare Rohan a glance as he had more pressing matters to attend to.

The closure of the farmers' market would surely rise to new problems, and he was there to maintain order.

Despite being aware of the virus threat, Lucas had not hesitated to head to Colifernia upon receiving Wynter's call. Undoubtedly, he was the person she trusted the most.

After resolving matters at Summit Hospital, Wynter and Drexel made their way to Willowbrook Hospital, where most of the clues seemed to lead.

Perhaps, many questions could be answered if they found Lancelot there. Besides, it was odd

that Willowbrook was the only hospital without any confirmed cases.

Once they were in the car, Wynter inquired, "Have you noticed anything weird at the hospital recently?"

Drexel pondered for a moment before answering, "There might be. Since the foreign doctors

arrived, the supply of medicine in the pharmacy has been depleting at an alarming rate.



"Also, a nurse from the night shift has gone missing. The director on duty claimed that she had applied for leave to return home, but they lost contact with her afterward.

"Some patients also reported hearing strange noises during the night, but they couldn't tell

if it was the howling of monkeys or a human." After listening to his account, Wynter fell into deep thoughts.

Meanwhile, in a hidden passage within Willowbrook Hospital's pharmacy, empty vials and monkey carcasses were scattered around. Caroline, the missing nurse, was tied unconscious

to a pillar.

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

### Chapter 1726 The Specialty Pills

Wynter and Drexel soon arrived at Willowbrook Hospital, where the bustling crowd of patients was notably larger than at other hospitals. The long line of patients waiting for medicine was a clear sign of the trust they placed in the hospital's care.

Wynter quickly realized that taking down Willowbrook Hospital would be far more challenging than dealing with the one in Riverburg, which was under the Gibson family's control. Apparently, Willowbrook Hospital could indeed provide effective treatments for its patients.

In the distance, an elderly woman was handing out a clinic banner and expressing her immense gratitude. She cried as she clutched the doctor's hand, "I can't thank you enough, Mr. Lappage. If it weren't for you, my husband wouldn't have lived to see another day!"

The doctor was a kind, middle-aged man with a fit build. He once appeared in a variety show, and his polished demeanor left a lasting impression.

The doctor patiently comforted the elderly woman, "We're just doing our job. Once you get home, keep an eye on your husband's condition. I'm sure he'll recover."

The elderly woman, overwhelmed with gratitude, struggled to find the right words. Some patients were even recording the scene and singing the doctor's praises.

The quickest way to learn about a hospital was through its attending physicians, especially those trusted and loved by their patients. Considering the doctor had been awarded a clinic banner, it was likely he had successfully treated a serious illness.

Wynter swiftly interrupted an applauding woman and inquired, "What's going on, madam? Is that doctor famous?"

"How could you not know Dr. Lappage? He's a miracle! He can cure any illness, and even cancer is nothing to him," the woman exclaimed in disbelief, as if not knowing the doctor was a form of ignorance.

"Is he really that skilled?" Wynter feigned astonishment as her gaze flicked toward Drexel.

Drexel obviously shouldn't be in the hospital at that time. Despite wearing a mask, he was still recognized right away. He had been keeping his distance from Wynter since entering the hospital, but he had no idea why she glanced at him.

Little did he know that Drexel had forgotten to mention Elisha Lappage earlier. After all, Elisha had been an average doctor with no exceptional skills until half a year ago.

Surprisingly, Elisha had grown remarkably skilled over the past year, achieving significant insights and breakthroughs in treating certain respiratory diseases. His reputation soared following his successful treatment of the two cancer patients.

In fact, most of the patients who visited Willowbrook Hospital had come specifically for his expertise. Though his transformation brought success to the hospital, Drexel failed to mention him.

Meanwhile, Martha Styward the woman chatting with Wynter couldn't stop singing Elisha's praises. "Not only is Dr. Lappage incredibly skilled, but he's also a kind man. Just look at the long line for his consultations that speaks for itself."

"If that's true, I should seek his treatment as well. Lately, I've had a cough and stuffy nose. I tried taking some cold medicine, but it didn't seem to help." Wynter played along with the woman's words.

Martha's eyes instantly lit up. "Why, I had the same symptoms! I visited various clinics and took different medicines, but nothing worked.

"But after consulting Dr. Lappage, I was all better! His medicine can be a bit pricey, but they're really effective. Just consult him every two weeks, and you'll be fine."

Hearing that, Wynter subtly frowned but kept her skepticism hidden. She flashed a smile and asked, "Does the health insurance cover the cost? You mentioned the medicines are expensive, but I'm only a student. I'm not sure if I can afford it."

Martha replied worriedly, "You're a student? I'm afraid you might not be able to afford it, then. The medicine costs around two thousand dollars for a two-week course. And it's a specialty pill, so it

red by health insurance.

"That said, you can't just remain sick like this, young lady. You should ask your parents for the money to get treated. Ms. Nina, who came with me, refused to purchase the pills because it was too expensive.

"She's been receiving treatment on and off, and now she's running a high fever. She was just admitted to the hospital. Not only has she suffered from her illness, but she also spent a fortune on ineffective treatments."

Martha made a valid point, but only under the premise that the illness was naturally occurring and not artificially induced. A temporary medicine with no guaranteed recovery was akin to ancient times' chronic detoxification practices.

While Wynter hoped that Elisha was an ethical doctor, she couldn't dismiss the situation easily under special circumstances. Moreover, it seemed odd that the specialty pills weren't classified as common medicine. Wynter doubted that Drexel was ignorant about it.

She flashed a smile at Martha. "Alright, I'll make an appointment with Dr. Lappage. By the way, is Ms. Nina in this hospital?"

"Oh, no. She claims that the treatments are too expensive, so she hardly comes here. She was admitted to another hospital nearby. It's funny, though. She actually thought of seeking spiritual guidance for her illness," Martha replied.

Wynter was momentarily stunned. Everything seemed just a bit too coincidental.

Patients unable to afford the medication were sent to another hospital, and all of them happened to be in critical condition. In contrast, those who received treatment at

Willowbrook Hospital showed immediate recovery.

Wynter pondered for a moment before averting her gaze. She made an appointment at the reception counter, though she had to wait through a long line.

After seeing Martha off, she approached Drexel and stated, "I'd like to hear more about this

Dr. Lappage and the pills you've kept hidden from the public."

Drexel didn't dare to meet her gaze. He knew that he would be held accountable for concealing information about the specialty pills, regardless of his intentions. After all, it had yet to be classified as common medicine.

"I admit that it's my fault. I shouldn't have allowed Dr. Lappage to use those pills," Drexel confessed.

Wynter remained silent, hoping to hear more. So, with a sigh, Drexel continued, "It all happened so suddenly. A week ago, people started coughing for no clear reason, and their respiratory systems quickly became infected.

"At first, the usual treatment worked, but then they stopped having any effect. It wasn't until Dr. Lappage came up with this prescription that the disease was finally brought under

control."

He seemed agitated as he stated, "Willowbrook is a public hospital, and our resources are limited. We only managed to advance so far thanks to Mr. Tarvin's investments.

"I'm willing to step down from my position, Ms. Quinnell, but the fact is, only Dr. Lappage's pills proved effective. It's the only reason the patients can return to their daily lives."

Wynter fixed her gaze at Drexel. "I'll decide once I analyze the medicine. As fellow medics, I'm sure you understand that a drug with short-lived efficacy and addictive potential isn't suitable for proper treatment.

"By the way, you mentioned Mr. Tarvin. If I recall correctly, he spent much of his youth abroad and later returned as an investor for Cascadia. Is he affiliated with the foreign doctors?"

When Drexel gave a nod of affirmation, Wynter seemed to piece something together. "What

about Dr. Lappage?"

Drexel pondered for a moment before answering, "If I remember correctly, he's Mr. Tarvin's distant relative."

"I see. I'll go talk to the doctor, and you can handle your work in the meantime. I need to know this building's structure.

"Don't worry about the drug. If it really is the cure you claim it is, everything will be resolved accordingly. But my gut tells me that it's not meant for the people, and I'm sure you know it, too," Wynter commented as she lifted her gaze.

Drexel's eyes widened in shock. Wynter's words struck right at the uneasiness he felt deep inside. In fact, he had doubts about Elisha's medication, but he couldn't bear to watch the

patients suffer.

Someone once remarked that he wasn't cut out to be a doctor, as the profession demanded more than just saving lives-it required maintaining rationality and a strong mindset. Leaving Drexel to his thoughts, Wynter returned to the queue. She discovered that Elisha could swiftly assess a patient's condition without the need for a full diagnosis. Hence, the queue progressed swiftly, and it was soon her turn.

Elisha greeted her warmly, "What symptoms are you experiencing? A cough? Do you have a

headache?"

"A bit. I thought it was just a normal cold, but I haven't recovered," Wynter said, pretending

to be unwell.

Elisha's lips curved into a smile beneath the mask. Without glancing at Wynter, he scribbled quickly on the paper before handing it to her. "You'll feel better immediately after taking the pills I prescribed. You can pick it up next door."

Anyone who had visited a hospital would recognize the standard procedure for collecting medicine. Occasionally, the medical examinations could be so time-consuming that patients expressed frustration over spending thousands on minor ailments.

In modern times, no one could afford to fall ill without the financial means to cover the costs. The other hospital's strict adherence to such procedures only underscored Elisha's integrity.

An experienced doctor might be able to assess a patient's condition with a mere glance, but

Wynter doubted Elisha shared the same skill. She asked tentatively, "My coughing has gotten a bit worse, Dr. Lappage. Would you mind taking a closer look at my symptoms?"

Elisha cast a glance at her and said, "I already know your condition the moment you sat down. Unfortunately, I can't give you the specifics. Those seeking my consultation know the rules here. Rest assured, young lady. The pills will take care of your illness."

Wynter pondered for a moment and asked, "How long should I take this? I'm still a student, and I don't have much money."

Elisha remained silent and glanced to the side. An assistant swiftly stepped in to explain. "The pills' effectiveness is contingent upon the patient's physique. Please step aside, miss. The doctor needs to see the next patient."

Before Wynter could respond, the crowd behind her clamored.

"Are you done yet, young lady? I need to get my medicine!" "That's right. We're all waiting, so don't waste our time!" someone huffed.

"It's exactly as Dr. Lappage said. Everyone's condition is different. How is he supposed to know how long it will take for you to recover?"

Faced with the criticisms, Wynter had no choice but to leave the seat and move to the next room.

As a fellow medic, she could gauge one's medical talent with just a brief conversation. Now that she had deduced Elisha's true capabilities, it was time to investigate the highly praised medicine.

Upon arriving at the pharmacy next door, Wynter noticed that the shelves were mostly stocked with packets of specialty pills, with only a limited selection of other medicines.

When she went to collect the medicine, the nurse barely glanced at the prescription as she grabbed a blister pack from the shelves.

"It's two thousand dollars for a packet of pills, consumed within two weeks. Scan the QR code to pay," the nurse instructed.

Wynter arched a brow and said, "You didn't even look at the prescription. How do you know

this is the one I need?"

"There's no need to look at it since all the patients share the same symptoms lately. Just pay

up," the nurse said as she waved dismissively.

After paying the bill, Wynter examined the blister pack. It contained 15 pills, exactly the amount needed for half a month's dosage.

As a medical professional, Wynter was well aware of the profits generated by the pharmaceutical industry. Buying medicine for an illness was no different from purchasing food when hungry. In fact, medicine was as vital as food, for it had the power to save lives.

In the face of life and death, two thousand dollars might not mean much. But what if that was just the beginning?

If a person had to pay two thousand dollars for half a month's supply, a family of five would

end up spending 20 thousand dollars a month for those specialty pills. It was especially so when considering Cascadia's vast population. Moreover, the medicine was a specialty drug rather than a common one.

Aside from its addictive properties, Wynte suspected that someone attempted to control the people through the drugs during the pandemic.

It was much like in ancient times, when the royal family would feed their undead soldiers drugs to ensure their obedience. Without it, the soldiers would face a violent death. Wynter's gaze darkened as she clutched the paper in her hand. Stepping away from the

crowd, she slipped into the service elevator with the card she had discreetly taken from the

nurse.

"I'm heading over to meet you right now, Mr. Asquith. Where's the virology lab? I need to use it," she texted Drexel, but he didn't reply. Just as she was feeling confused, he texted back, urging her not to meet him.

Wynter frowned at the message. She swiftly deduced that something had happened to Drexel

-and she was right.

Logically speaking, the hospital director held the highest authority. However, Drexel was aware that he was merely a figurehead. Instead, Willowbrook Hospital's true authorities were the foreign doctors standing before him.

"What are you doing here, Asquith? Shouldn't you be at the meeting?" one of the foreign doctors casually asked, appearing rather frivolous.

Dave took off his glasses and gazed at Drexel. His eyes then dropped to the documents in Drexel's hands. "What do you need those for?"

Drexel could feel his palms sweating as he fumbled for an explanation. "Oh, it's about the recent outbreak. The higher-ups have ordered updates to the wards and equipment in all hospitals to prepare for future cases.

"Each hospital is required to provide information for personnel allocation. There will be specialists visiting, as well."

However, Dave wasn't convinced. "Does that information include the hospital's layout? It seems you've forgotten what Mr. Tarvin said, Asquith. The only reason your hospital is still running is thanks to us. Everything you have here is underdeveloped. "Without me or Arwel, you wouldn't be able to cure half of these patients. Shouldn't you

consult us before making any decisions?"

As Dave spoke, he closed in on Drexel. "Also, am I imagining things, or are you shaking?"

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

### Chapter 1727 Capturing the Spies

Though Drexel shook with fear, he noticed Arwel and Dave's suspicious concern about the hospital's structure. Taking a deep breath, Drexel explained, "Those are the orders from the higher-ups. They're currently on site. If you're not convinced, I can take you to meet them."

Hearing that, Arwel grabbed his collar and threatened, "We don't care about orders from the higher-ups! What matters now is that you didn't consult us beforehand. Do you think you're above us now that the hospital's doing well? I guess you need to be taught some lessons."



Arwel shoved a book at Drexel and raised his fist, but that was when a feminine voice sounded from the door. "Have you prepared the documents, Mr. Asquith? The higher-ups are urging us."

It was none other than Wynter, who had come disguised in a nurse's uniform regarding doubts about Drexel's earlier message. Drexel instantly recognized her voice, and Arwel removed the gag from his mouth.

Dave moved to open the door and found Wynter standing there. She silently greeted him before addressing Drexel, "Are the papers ready, Mr. Asquith? They're pressing us."

"Oh, yes. It's all set. I was just discussing a few things with these gentlemen. I'll be right over," Drexel replied.

From Wynter's attire and speech, he could tell that she had noticed something amiss. Instead of calling her out on it, he played along with her words.

When Wynter turned around, her eyes landed on Dave's nametag. She cast a quick glance at him, recognizing his golden locks as a match to the hair sample she had retrieved. She looked away and followed Drexel to the door.

Just then, Dave called out to her. "Which department are you from? I don't think I've seen you around."

As Wynter was about to respond, Drexel jumped in. "She's a graduate I recruited this year. She's still completing her internship."

Dave considered his words before asking, "Which department has she been busy with lately?"

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Drexel calmly replied, "She's been helping me with administrative work. Do I have to report that, too?"

"We're just looking out for our new colleague. Don't take it personally, Mr. Asquith. The higher-ups are pressing, aren't they? You'd better get going," Dave stated, waving his hand dismissively.

His expression darkened as soon as Drexel and Wynter were out of sight. "When the higher-ups leave, we'll teach Asquith a lesson he won't forget. We'll make sure he's gone for good."

Arwel stretched his back with a grin. "That sounds like a plan. This hospital is under our

thumb, anyway. He was so cocky just now. I would've dealt with him already if that nurse hadn't walked in."

Upon recalling Wynter's gaze, Dave wondered curiously, "That nurse looked at my nametag before leaving. What was she thinking?"

"You don't realize how charming you are, do you? There's a saying in Cascadia about love at first sight. She probably has her eyes on you." Arwel chuckled. Hearing that, Dave dispelled his doubts.

Meanwhile, Drexel led Wynter to an empty room. He cautiously locked the door before handing her the documents. "Thank you, Ms. Quinnell. If you hadn't shown up, those thugs would've beaten me to a pulp. Mr. Tarvin brought them in, and they're the real power behind this hospital."

"No need for thanks. You've done a good job. This hospital may be well-managed, but it doesn't mean they prioritize the patients' welfare," Wynter replied.

She pulled out the hospital blueprint from the pile of documents. She spotted a basement marked on the blueprint and asked Drexel about it.

"It used to be a lab. Something happened, and now it's abandoned," Drexel answered.

Wynter arched an eyebrow. "How many people know about the basement?"

"Not many. Aside from those two earlier -Dave and Arwel, only those who used to work in Brighthope know about it," Drexel replied.

Wynter nodded in acknowledgment and grabbed her phone. "Dispatch a team to monitor the hospital's vicinity. Arrest anyone who seems suspicious."

Once the order was given, she turned to Drexel. "You know where the basement is, right? Take me there. I suspect they've repurposed the site."

Drexel hesitated. "I do, but it's been so long. The keys might not be in my office anymore."

Wynter tapped on the desk as she pondered. "No need for that. If my suspicion is true, the keys have already been taken. Just take me there, and I'll handle the lock."

As Drexel led her outside, they ran into a department director, asking for Drexel's signature on some documents. Drexel instructed the department director to meet him in his office before continuing their way.

After a few turns, they arrived at an entrance sealed by an iron gate. Wynter took out a silver needle and worked on the lock. With a few quick twists, the door clicked open.

Behind it, a gruesome lab came into view. Its floor was littered with animal carcasses and human remains, while the vials and tools were scattered haphazardly across the room. It was a scene straight out of hell.

Drexel could hardly suppress his anger at the horrifying sight. Despite being the hospital's director, he had no idea that such a lab existed. For Wynter, the stark contrast between the life-saving efforts happening above and the hellish scene before her was too overwhelming. At that moment, Caroline, tied to a pillar, stirred at the sound of the door opening. She tried to call out, but her mouth was taped shut, so all she could manage was muffled grunts. Still, the sound echoed clearly in the basement.

Drexel followed behind Wynter as she traced the sound. Upon spotting Caroline, he exclaimed in shock, "Caroline? What are you doing here? I thought you went home!"

Wynter tore off the tape from Caroline's mouth, and she quickly explained, "I was abducted by Mr. Cowell and Mr. Merrick. I was patrolling the wards when I noticed the pharmacy lights still on.

"I went to switch them off but found a secret door. They were running experiments in here! I tried to escape, but they caught me."

Drexel was astounded by her revelation. Though he knew about the iron gate leading to the basement, he never expected Dave and Arwel to have secretly installed a door in the pharmacy to access it.

After hearing Caroline's account, Wynter realized where the specialty pills originated. She ordered her subordinates to bring Caroline for a medical examination and locked down the basement. She then instructed Drexel to guide her to the virology lab.

Even though she held strong suspicions regarding the specialty pills, she knew she needed solid evidence to back them up, lest she would be accused of slandering an honorable doctor. Drexel led Wynter to a virology lab and provided the necessary protective equipment. He then stepped aside, waiting quietly for the results.

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Meanwhile, Dave and Arwel were leisurely sipping tea at their office.

"We're already halfway through the plan, so we should get out of here soon. Cascadians are

so dumb, especially Lappage! He actually believes those pills can cure the virus!" A wide smile spread across Dave's face as he broke into laughter.

"He might be hailed as a miracle doctor now, but once things go wrong, he would be nothing but a fraud. All evidence points to him, and we'll come out clean. That said, we wouldn't have gotten this far without Mr. Tarvin's help," Arwel chimed in.

Dave nodded in agreement. "Mr. Tarvin is a citizen of Asmaria. We should bring him along when we make our escape. But before sunset, let's give that nurse a taste of our new-developed medicine!"

The two chatted away merrily, showing complete disregard for Cascadia's laws.

In the virology lab, Wynter crushed the specialty pills and ran a series of tests. Half an hour

later, she finally found the answer needed.

When Drexel inquired about the results, she replied, "It's a new type of virus that temporarily alleviates symptoms of cold. However, it may cause much worse health effects

in the long run."

Hearing that, Drexel slapped himself in remorse. "I thought this pill was a cure, and that's why I agreed to Dr. Lappage's request. I never imagined it was a new type of virus. I've caused harm to the public."

Wynter grabbed his wrist and stated firmly, "Now isn't the time to beat yourself up. Right now, my subordinates have the entire hospital surrounded, some of them posing as nurses. What you need to do is get back to work as usual and avoid drawing suspicion. Don't think

about the rest."

Drexel gave a nod of acknowledgment, though a heavy weariness clouded his eyes.

At that moment, Elisha was still seeing the patients at his post. "It's easy to handle your cold symptoms. I'll give you half a month's worth of medicine, and there's no need for further examination. If anything comes up, feel free to consult me again."

"Thank you, Dr. Lappage. You're truly a miracle!" a patient exclaimed with immense gratitude.

Elisha flashed a smile and said, "I'm just doing my job. Rest assured, you'll recover soon."

None of the patients had any complaints about him. They were convinced that he was an honorable doctor who truly cared for their well-being.

Glancing at the time, Elisha called out to the long line of patients before him. "It's getting late, everyone. Please come back early tomorrow."

With that, he wrapped up his work and headed to the restroom. As he gazed into the mirror,

he couldn't help but smirk. "I'm this hospital's backbone now. Everyone depends on me!"

"No, you're not even worthy." A voice suddenly interjected from behind him it was Wynter.

She flicked her coin as she cast a glance at Elisha. "I thought you're saving the patients, but it turns out you're putting them at risk. How dare you call yourself a doctor?" Elisha was surprised by her sudden appearance at the door. "Aren't you the young lady who asked for my pills?"

"How else could I have analyzed it?" Wynter confirmed his confusion.

Upon hearing the reply, Elisha glared at her. "How dare you doubt me? I'm a doctor! Every Colifernian knows that I'm the miracle doctor!"

Wynter sneered. "That's because they have no idea what's in your pills. Take him away—quietly."

As she walked away, two Special Unit members swiftly covered Elisha's mouth and dragged him out through the backdoor.

Recalling Caroline's mention of Dave and Arwel planning to use Caroline for their final experiment, Wynter instructed the Special Unit members to lie in ambush while a female member assumed Caroline's position.

Wynter then made a call to Lucas. "This is urgent. I need you to find and isolate all patients who have purchased Dr. Elisha Lappage's medicine from Brighthope Hospital. "They're likely carrying a new type of virus, but we'll need further analysis to confirm. In the worst-case scenario, we may need to lock down the entire Colifernia." When Lucas heard her request, he quickly came to a decision. "Leave it to me. Stay safe, Wynter."

Once the call ended, he quickly ordered an investigation into the medical treatments and prescriptions at Brighthope Hospital.

After that, he contacted Jackson. "There's a chance that Colifernia may need to be locked down for quarantine. I need your approval, Mr. Munn Senior."

There was a brief silence before Jackson replied, "Do what you have to. I'll take care of the rest."

Lucas responded affirmatively to Jackson's approval.

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In his office, Drexel sat silently in his seat as he was weighed down by the crushing reality of

Wynter's test result. He had poured so much effort into managing Brighthope Hospital, only to be faced with such a devastating revelation.

Guilt overwhelmed him. While he hoped to make amends for the citizens, he was told to remain in his office. As he drowned in his own remorse, his phone suddenly rang. He quickly gathered himself before answering the call.

Upon learning that it was a call from Lucas, he sprang up from his seat. "Is there anything I

can help you with, Mr. Keller?" he asked nervously.

"I've heard about your situation. It's not entirely your fault. You were only trying to do what

was best for the people," Lucas stated bluntly.

Drexel teared up at Lucas' words. Though he attempted to say something, his voice failed him.

"Do well by the people. I have faith in you, Drexel Asquith." With that, the call ended.

As the sun began to set, Dave and Arwel were preparing to head down to the basement. All of

a sudden, Dave received a call.

"You've been found out," the voice informed.

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

Chapter 1728 A Mole

Dave froze in place after hearing those words. The other party decisively hung up, leaving him in shock and confusion.

Dave quickly bolted to the door, locking it securely. Then, he moved to the window, peering outside cautiously. He didn't notice anything unusual, but his behavior alarmed Arwel, who asked urgently, "Dave, what's going on?"

He quickly turned to Arwel. "We've been exposed."

Arwel shot up from his seat, joining Dave at the window. His gaze landed on a few nurses he didn't recognize. Pointing them out, he said urgently, "Look, do you recognize those people? I've never seen them before."

Dave narrowed his eyes. Sure enough, they weren't familiar faces. They had meticulously reviewed the hospital's staff list earlier to ensure everything was in order.

Dave had already been slightly suspicious when Wynter appeared unexpectedly, but Drexel had assured him she was a recent hire. Trusting the explanation, he hadn't pursued it further at the time.

Arwel's expression darkened as he glared outside. "Damn those Cascadians! They've found us out. They've probably discovered the situation in the basement, too. We need to get out of here immediately!"

Dave nodded in agreement. "It seems like the hospital has already been secretly taken over. We'll have to use the secret passage to escape."

With that, he walked over to a bookshelf and pulled out a specific book. A hidden mechanism was revealed behind it. Placing his palm on the button, he pressed it firmly. An underground door slowly creaked open, revealing a pitch-black passageway.

After carefully placing the book back in its original position, he turned to Arwel. Together, they turned on the flashlights on their phones and slowly moved into the secret passage.

Meanwhile, Wynter appeared in Drexel's office. 'Mr. Asquith, Lucas should have already called you. Don't dwell on things that have already happened, and focus on the task at hand. I've already secretly captured Elisha.'

Then, glancing at her watch, she added, 'In two minutes, Dave and Arwel will also be apprehended. Call their office now and tell them the higher-ups have an urgent task for them.'

Drexel nodded firmly. He reached for the phone on his desk and dialed the number quickly. The landline's sharp ringing echoed through the enclosed office, but no one answered.

Wynter's brows furrowed at this. She immediately took out her walkie-talkie and issued an order. 'Listen up. Proceed to the office at the corner of the third floor right away.'

Then, she strode toward the door with purposeful steps.

Drexel remained silent, but his unease was evident. He, too, realized something was wrong. They would have picked up the phone if they were in their office

The Special Unit's members secretly stationed in the hospital gathered at the third-floor office's doorway. Wynter carefully placed her hand on the doorknob and turned it gently. A few seconds later, the door creaked open, revealing a room filled with documents, desks, and books. Yet, the two men were nowhere to be seen.

Wynter immediately picked up her walkie-talkie. 'Has anyone outside the hospital seen suspicious individuals leaving, particularly two foreign men?'

A member stationed outside responded promptly, 'Ms. Quinnell, no suspicious individuals spotted. The only people we've seen are a pair of young men and an elderly couple carrying medical files.'

An elderly couple. A realization struck Wynter instantly. 'What were this elderly couple's characteristics, and when did they leave?'

'The old man was dressed simply with a head full of white hair. The old woman was slightly hunched and wore a hat, but we couldn't see more details. They left about ten minutes ago.'

Wynter immediately issued a new order. 'Everyone, mobilize now! Pursue that elderly couple with full force they've used disguises. The old woman is likely covering her golden-blond hair with the hat. If necessary, request assistance from traffic control and access surveillance footage.'

The Special Unit members quickly shed their nurse uniforms and dashed toward the exits.



Sitting in the office, Wynter tapped on the desk rhythmically, her mind racing as she mumbled to herself, "How did they realize they were exposed? And with the hospital under such tight surveillance, how did they manage to move from the third floor to the first?"

Questions replayed in her head, over and over, until a thought struck her the pharmacy's hidden passage.

Her sharp gaze swept across the room, landing on the bookshelf. She scrutinized the shelves, noting the books on medicine, pharmaceuticals, and foreign languages.

Her attention zeroed in on a single worn-out book on the bookshelf's second row. It was something that seemed out of place in their office. Reaching for it, she pulled it from the shelf.

As she suspected, a concealed mechanism was revealed behind it. Without hesitation, she pressed the button, and the sound of a door opening came from behind her.

Switching on her flashlight, she stepped into the darkness. A short walk in revealed a table with two white lab coats laid neatly on it. The name tags read Dave Cowell and Arwel Merrick.

Continuing forward, she came to a staircase leading downward. At the bottom stood a large door with another button beside it. As she walked over to press it, the door creaked open to reveal a hospital ward. Inside, a motionless patient lay on a bed.

Wynter slowly stepped out of the ward, noting the proximity of the passage to the hospital's main door.

Shortly after, a report came through her walkie-talkie. "We found a hat and a wig discarded in a trash bin 2500 feet from the hospital."

"Come back. They're already long gone," Wynter announced.

Right after, she pulled out her phone to make a call. "Lucas, the two spies in the hospital have escaped. I suspect we have a mole, and a high-level one at that. This operation was known to very few people."

Lucas, on the other end, slammed his hand on his desk in frustration. Juan flinched but stayed silent. Lucas said deliberately, "Wynter, give me some time, and I'll investigate. From what I know, only provincial officials have the right to know about this operation. Leave it to me."

After a brief acknowledgment from Wynter, Lucas ended the call

He then immediately dialed another number. "Mr. Munn Senior, Wynter just reported that the operation to apprehend the spies failed. But only Colifernia provincial officials know about this operation."

Jackson narrowed his eyes. 'Be bold and take action! The thing I despise most in life is spies. Back in my day, I'd deal with them the moment I caught one. I'll take the blame if anything goes wrong!'

His words were like a shot of adrenaline straight into Lucas veins. "I will give it my all!"

Elisha was brought into a detention room, his hands and feet securely bound. Glaring at the people flanking him, he shouted angrily, "I'm the attending physician at Willowbrook Medical Center! What gives you the right to arrest me? I'm going to call the police! I'll sue you!"

The two guards ignored him entirely. Seeing their indifference only fueled his rage, and he was about to unleash another tirade when Wynter entered the room.

"Do you want to know what gives us the right?" Wynter asked, her tone icy. "The fact that the medicine you sold is problematic is more than enough to get you executed ten times over."

Hearing her words, Elisha quickly retorted, "I was doing it for the people! The medicine does work-it can cure them! How is that wrong? Is it just because it's not covered by health insurance?"

Wynter waved dismissively. 'I'm not here to argue semantics. I have a few questions for you.'

Before Elisha could protest, she cut him off. "You have the option to stay silent. If you choose that, I'll have you sent to court right now. Rest assured, I'll do my best to ensure you'll cease to exist in just a few days.'

The color drained from Elisha's face. 'I'll answer! Ask whatever you want!'

"It's said that you were an unremarkable doctor before-someone who struggled in the profession. Then suddenly, you rose to prominence during the recent outbreak of fever and cough.

"Did you know about the outbreak in advance, or was it just a coincidence that your reputation surged along

with it?'

Elisha hesitated before replying, "I admit, my skills are average, but I've always been ambitious-"

"Speak plainly,' Wynter interrupted.

"It was because someone told me about this medicine, claiming it could cure fever and cough. At first, I only wanted to try it out without expecting much. However, to my surprise, it worked. Then, more and more patients started coming to me for it."

Wynter caught an important detail. "Who told you about the medicine?"

Elisha waved his hand dismissively. "It was Mr. Cowell. He said time was of the essence and that I should

follow his instructions if I wanted fame and fortune.

"He's a great guy. He knew it was Rohan who got me into the hospital. That's why he helped me out a lot." His tone betrayed his admiration for Rohan.

Wynter nodded. 'Dave and Arwel have likely fled. They were foreign operatives sent to sabotage Cascadia. Right now, you're nothing more than a fool who's had their head slammed in a door."

With that, Wynter stood up, preparing to leave. She had a strong feeling that Elisha was nothing more than a

scapegoat.

Elisha froze at her words. "What? What do you mean they've fled? Weren't they here to save the patients? Does that mean the outbreak was their doing? Did they give me the formula o prescribe to patients, only for me to take the blame when things went wrong?"

Wynter didn't mince words. "Exactly. While they appeared to treat symptoms, the drugs they provided were designed to worsen the patients' health over time. It's like a slow-acting virus, meant to cause immense

suffering.

"And you, the so-called 'miracle doctor? Did you even test the formula they gave you? I bet you didn't. You distributed it like an unregulated, uncertified product.'

Elisha lowered his head. "I ran tests, but they told me it was a fight fire with fire approach. I did suspect them, but they assured me there wouldn't be any consequences. They said if anything happened, someone would

clean up the mess."

Wynter looked at Elisha. 'Clean up? Did they say who?"

Elisha shook his head. "No, but I overheard them on the phone. They mentioned transferring funds overseas

to that person's spouse-someone with the surname Muller. They promised everything would be clean and even offered to visit the province to express their gratitude in person."

"With the surname Muller?' Wynter rose from her seat and strode out of the room while dialing a number on

her phone.

Meanwhile, Lucas had gathered all the documents of the officials in Colifernia who were aware of the operation. Their dossiers were laid out before him on the desk

His phone suddenly rang. He immediately answered when he saw that it was from Wynter.

"Lucas, I just got intel from Elisha. Those two people are backed by someone with the surname Muller. Check

Colifernia"

if there's anyone with that surname among the officials Lucas quickly flipped through the files on his desk twice but didn't find anyone with that surname.

"Wynter, I've checked all the files in front of me. There's no official with the surname Muller.' Wynter furrowed her brows, carefully analyzing Elisha's words-'someone with the surname Muller' and a " spouse". The spouse's surname was Muller, but Elisha hadn't specified if the spouse was a husband or a wife.

Lucas interrupted her thoughts. 'Wynter, what are you thinking?"

Snapping back to reality, Wynter replied, "Lucas, the spouse's surname is Muller, but that doesn't prove the spouse is a male. What if it's a female instead?"

Lucas froze for a moment, stunned by her perspective. He hadn't even thought that the spy could be a female.

He was focused solely on male officials since all the files on his desk pertained to male personnel in the

province. Rubbing his temples, Lucas said, 'I get it now, Wynter. I'll immediately dispatch someone to investigate the female officials' husbands."

Wynter added, 'This individual may not need to know about the operation directly, but the spy must still be

within the province."

Lucas acknowledged her insight and promptly ordered an investigation into the female officials and their

spouses' files.

After hanging up, Wynter returned to the detention room. Looking at Elisha, she said, "If this information leads to results, I'll push for you to earn merit through your cooperation."

Elisha was visibly dejected. He looked at her with regret-filled eyes. 'It's all my fault. I trusted the wrong people. Please, you have to catch them!'

Meanwhile, Dave and Arwel lounged leisurely on the couch.

Just then, an electronic sound echoed from the door before it swung open. A figure stepped inside, fully

covered from head to toe in thick clothing.

Dave held up two glasses of champagne, offering one to the newcomer. "We couldn't have pulled this off

without you. Now we can properly welcome you."

The person removed their sunglasses, casting a sharp glance Dave. "This is the last time. You've gone too far this time. You are provoking Cascadia's authority."

Without waiting for a reply, the newcomer began scanning the room, heading toward the bathroom to check

inside.

Arwel smiled faintly. 'There's no need to look. It's just Dave and me here.'

Hearing this, the newcomer slowly removed their mask and picked up the champagne glass. She took a sip,

leaving a faint lipstick mark on the rim.

In a calm tone, she said, "I've done my part. Make sure the rest of the money is transferred to the account

immediately."

Dave chuckled as he shook his head. "The money isn't an issue, but we're not done yet. We need your help to

leave this place."

The woman immediately shook her head. "That's out of the question."

Dave swirled the champagne in his glass, fixing her with a knowing look. "That's fine. The worst-case

scenario is we get caught. Of course, we'd have no choice but to tell them all about you."

Her expression darkened. "Are you threatening me?"

Dave spread his hands in mock innocence. "It's not a threat but just a friendly reminder of an old Cascadia

saying-The wise adapt to the circumstances."

"Wait for my news." With that, Seraphine Muller donned her mask and sunglasses once more, leaving without another word

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

Chapter 1729 Hope

After Seraphine left, Arwel turned to Dave. "There's one loose end we haven't tied up. Patient Zero is still lying in the hospital room. That's our first research subject."

Dave raised an eyebrow dismissively. "It should be fine. They won't pay attention to it. Besides, Cascadia's medical technology isn't advanced enough for them to figure it out."

Meanwhile, Wynter was piecing together the broader implications of the situation. She realized that this pandemic was only the beginning.

In her analysis, the foreign powers involved intended to use this crisis to plunge Cascadia-and potentially the world-into a passive state.

From the initial outbreak to regional quarantines, the fallout could spiral into disruptions that would severely hinder Cascadia's development, even causing economic regression.

Having clarified her thoughts, Wynter pulled out her phone and dialed a number.

A familiar elderly voice answered from the other end. "Wynter, if you'd waited any longer to call, I'd have thought you'd forgotten me."

It was none other than Jackson.

Wynter's tone grew serious. 'Mr. Munn Senior, this pandemic could impact Cascadia's development on a massive scale, potentially causing economic setbacks.'

Jackson's expression turned equally solemn. "Are you trying to say that foreign powers are trying to use this pandemic to put Cascadia in a passive position?"

"Yes, Mr. Munn Senior. That's my preliminary conclusion, though it may only be the tip of the iceberg," Wynter replied.

Over the phone, Jackson exuded the commanding presence of an experienced leader. "Wynter, tell me what you need, and I'll make the arrangements. I'll also convene a meeting with the higher-ups to share your assessment."

"I'm sure Lucas has informed you about the spy in Colifernia, but for now, that's secondary. What we urgently need is cross-provincial support for the hospitals in Colifernia. The current medical staff and facilities are clearly insufficient.

"Additionally, I'll personally lead a team to develop a treatment for this virus. But I can't guarantee how quickly the results will come. Stabilizing the situation in Colifernia will require a significant influx of doctors from other provinces."

Jackson readily agreed. 'I'll arrange for nearby provincial hospitals to provide support immediately. Just focus on your research. I'll deal with the situation outside. And be careful.'

With that, he ended the call and turned to his secretary. 'Get in touch with major hospitals near Colifernia immediately. Request voluntary assistance for Colifernia. No coercion.'

The secretary nodded and quickly left to execute Jackson's orders.

Left alone, Jackson stood by the window, gazing at the vast and prosperous land before him. "Wynter, you can do it. You're my last disciple, and I have faith in you."

His words were heard only by himself.

Wynter then sought out Drexel. 'For the foreseeable future, I'll be in the lab working on a special treatment for this outbreak. The hospital's daily operations will fall to you. Don't use doctors you don't trust, and don't doubt those you trust.'

"Understood, Ms. Quinnell. I'll personally ensure the hospital runs smoothly,' Drexel replied.

Suddenly, he seemed to recall something. 'Ms. Quinnell, there's one thing I forgot to mention. Dave and Arwel treated a patient when they first arrived at the hospital. This was before the outbreak.

"That patient had a high fever, persistent cough, severe vomiting, and diarrhea. Eventually, they fell into a coma. Would you like to take a look?"

Wynter's mind immediately jumped to the secret passage from which the two had escaped. It led to a hospital ward, where she saw a comatose patient.

Drexel's words sparked a realization. Instantly, she asked, 'Do we have that patient's records?"

Drexel thought for a moment. "I think the patient was from the area near the farmers' market."

Wynter's eyes lit up.

Previously, at the Summit Hospital, Nigel had mentioned Patient Zero was also linked to the farmers' market. It dawned on her that the individual at the Summit Hospital might not have been the true Patient Zero. The real one could be here!

Wynter began making her way to the first-floor ward, and Drexel followed closely behind.

When Wynter first encountered the patient, she assumed they were simply another one of Dave and Arwel's victims. Now, she realized this might be their initial test subject-Patient Zero.

Wynter wore a mask and stepped into the ward. She gestured for Drexel to stay outside to avoid potential exposure.

At the Utopia Hospital of Howlbay, the director, Stefan Althea, gathered the nurses and doctors for an urgent meeting.

He spoke slowly, his tone heavy with gravity. "Everyone, I've just received a notice. Colifernia is experiencing a serious outbreak and is in desperate need of medical support. This will be a voluntary mission-no one is obligated to go."

Stefan took a deep breath before continuing, "However, I must be honest. This mission carries significant risks. There is a high chance of exposure and potentially life-threatening danger-"

Before he could finish, voices rose one after another.



"Dr. Althea, I'll go! A doctor's heart is like a parent's! I'll be wherever the illness is!"

"I'll go, too! I may be a nurse, but I can take care of patients."

"Count me in, Dr. Althea We're doctors. Who will the people rely on if we retreat at a time like this?"

"Life is precious, but I am not afraid. If we must risk our lives to save others, so be it!"

"I'll go, too!"

Stefan's eyes welled with tears. "Good. You're all outstanding! Time is of the essence, so pack your things immediately. Transport will depart in one hour.

"Remember this. 20 people are leaving, and all 20 must come back! You'll return victorious, and I'll personally welcome you back with a banquet!"

This was the unique spirit of unity among Cascadia's people.

Wynter observed the patient lying on the hospital bed. She skillfully inserted silver needles into specific acupuncture points.

Suddenly, the patient's fingers twitched, and his eyes slowly opened, meeting Wynter's gaze. He appeared disoriented, unsure of what was happening.

Seeing him awake, Wynter spoke. "Let's keep this brief. What happened from the time you were admitted to the hospital until now?"

Suddenly, he seemed to recall something. 'Ms. Quinnell, there's one thing I forgot to mention. Dave and Arwel treated a patient when they first arrived at the hospital. This was before the outbreak.

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"Dr. Asquith, more patients with high fevers just arrived. We're running out of beds!"

Drexel gave quick orders. "Add more beds to the wards where possible. If that's still not enough, set up beds in

the corridors!"

In the virology lab, Wynter carefully studied the virus in Terry's body. She discovered that it was highly destructive, especially to the elderly. Those with weaker immune systems were likely to die from this.

"Dr. Asquith, the patient in bed 5 is struggling to breathe!"

"The patient in bed 7 is coughing up blood!"

"The patient in bed 15 can't hang on any longer, Dr. Asquith!"

Drexel could feel his heart bleeding just from hearing these reports from the nurses. These were all lives at

stake.

"Do your absolute best to care for each patient!" he urged, his voice heavy with resolve.

Amid the chaos, no one paused for even a sip of water or a bite of food.

Meanwhile, a convoy of vehicles approached Colifernia from the highway. Inside the cars were medical

professionals, all already suited up in protective gear.

One of them addressed the group. "This outbreak in Colifernia may be as dangerous as the cholera epidemic. I need every one of you to ensure your own safety while caring for the patients."

As he finished speaking, he pulled out a marker and wrote each person's surname on the back of their suits.

Having received prior notice, the Colifernia traffic police were already stationed at the highway entrance, waiting to welcome the convoy. Each officer took the lead in escorting a medical vehicle directly to the

hospital.

Drexel was busy checking on patients when he noticed a group of people in protective gear arriving at the

hospital entrance.

After finishing his rounds, he hurried over. "Hello, I'm Dr. Asquith of the Willowbrook Medical Center. Thank

you for coming to Colifernia to assist us.'

As he spoke, he bent slightly, intending to bow in gratitude.

The leader of the group quickly stepped forward to stop him. 'Dr. Alistair, there's no need for this. We're all doctors. When people are in trouble, it's only right for others to lend a hand."

He continued, "What's the situation in the hospital? We're ready to start work immediately.' Drexel replied with a heavy heart, 'The situation is grim. Many of the elderly patients are in critical condition.

They have persistent high fevers and are coughing up blood. Despite all our efforts, some are slipping away. Several patients have already passed."

"Then, let's get inside immediately. Every life saved is a family made whole.'

As he finished speaking, a nurse rushed over in a panic. 'Dr. Asquith, the condition of the patient in bed 20 has worsened! And the patient in bed 21... has passed."

The group wasted no time and hurried into the hospital, determined to fight death itself and save as many

lives as they could. Outside, the traffic police who had escorted the convoy watched the medical team disappear into the hospital. One of them remarked with admiration, "These are true angels, heading into the storm."

Drexel reached the virology lab's door and reported, "Ms. Quinnell, the situation is getting worse. Patients are deteriorating rapidly, and we've already lost several."

From inside, Wynter responded, "No one wants to see this happen. I'm working as fast as I can to develop the cure. You must do everything in your power to stabilize the patients' conditions until then."

Time ticked by as Wynter performed repeated tests, adjustments, and recalculations. Each trial brought her

closer to a breakthrough.

Finally, after countless comparisons and refinements, she held a small vial containing the long-awaited cure.

Terry asked as he endured the pain, "Ms. Quinnell, is the medicine successful?" Wynter replied steadily, "It seems like it has been successfully developed." Terry looked at Wynter before replying with determination, "Give it to me. I'll be the lab rat for it." Without hesitation, he grabbed the vial of the special medicine and swallowed it. Wynter didn't say a word but

diligently monitored his condition, taking his temperature and checking for any relief every few minutes.

Two hours later, she realized Terry's temperature had dropped when she measured it again.

Terry smiled at Wynter. "It worked!"

Wynter didn't have the luxury to celebrate. Instead, she rushed to produce more of the medicine. Hours

passed, and she managed to create a substantial batch.

Picking up her phone, she called Drexel. "Come to the virology lab immediately and distribute the medicine to

the critical patients first," she instructed.

Drexel was filled with relief upon hearing her words. "Ms. Quinnell, is the development successful? Excellent!

I'm on my way!" When Drexel arrived at the virology lab door, he noticed Terry's improved condition. A glimmer of hope shone

in his eyes as he said, "Ms. Quinnell, I'm here. On behalf of Colifernia's people, thank you." Handing him the medicine, Wynter instructed, 'Quickly distribute this. Prioritize the critical cases first.'

She then directed the Special Unit to distribute the remaining medicine to other hospitals and the affected residents near the farmers' market.

Turning to Terry, Wynter asked, 'Weren't you worried? What if the medicine didn't work and it cost you your

life?"

Terry smiled and replied, "I wasn't worried because we're all Cascadians.'

Hearing that Wynter nodded. She took a deep breath and said as she headed toward the door, "When you've

fully recovered, don't hesitate to contact me if there's anything you need."

The outbreak was finally under control. Not only had countless lives been saved, but the foreign powers' schemes had been thwarted as well

Just then, Jackson called. 'Good job, Wynter. You've done brilliantly. You are Cascadia's pride!" Wynter responded with humility, "Mr. Munn Senior, this crisis is over for now. But there's no guarantee they

won't try something else. We must remain vigilant."

Jackson's tone became stern. 'It's time we showed them what we're made of. We might not strike first, but we're never afraid to fight back. Leave that to me. You, on the other hand, should get some rest." Wynter smiled slightly. 'There's no time to rest. Didn't you always say that 'With great power comes great responsibility?

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

After she hung up the phone, Drexel approached Wynter with visible excitement. 'Ms. Quinnell, the medicine has shown remarkable effects! Many patients are already starting to recover!'

Unbeknownst to them, a group of patients had followed closely behind Drexel. As they saw him speaking with Wynter, they gathered around, their eyes filled with gratitude.

"Thank you, Ms. Quinnell. We wouldn't have made it through this ordeal without you."

"We've all begun to recover thanks to your medicine. We came together to express our gratitude."

"I can't believe how young you are. You truly live up to the saying, 'Great talent shows itself early.'"

The crowd spoke one after another, and when they finished, all eyes turned toward Wynter. In unison, they bowed deeply.

Wynter tried to help them stand one by one, but they remained bent over.

Suddenly, a golden light emanated from behind them, surging toward Wynter and merging into her body. It was invisible to the naked eye, but Wynter knew it was the merit she earned.

After the group finally stood upright, Wynter addressed them. "This was a collective effort. You've only just begun to recover. Please return to your wards to rest for now."

She then instructed the nurses to assist the patients back to their rooms.

Meanwhile, the Special Unit sent in an update. "All medicine has been distributed, and the crisis is resolved." Wynter quickly issued a message. The outbreak is under control. Lift the lockdowns."

Just then, Lucas called. "Wynter, without you, Cascadia might have fallen under this virus' grip. We've just apprehended a spy hiding in the province, and we've also tracked down the two fugitives from the hospital. If nothing goes wrong, they'll be captured within ten minutes."

Wynter replied firmly, "Lucas, once those two are caught, inform me immediately. I'll handle their interrogations personally.'

Lucas acknowledged her request and hung up, heading off to oversee the capture operation.

Meanwhile, in a courtyard located in the western part of Colifernia, someone reported, "Mr. Lofstedt, Mr. Tarvin has been taken into custody."

Eric Lofstedt, who was sitting on a rocking chair, slowly opened his eyes. "Taken into custody? For what?" "He tried to intimidate the Quinnell family and caused trouble in the restricted area during the lockdown." Hearing this, Eric shook his head. 'What a useless fool. Deliver a message to the Chamber of Commerce later. From today onward, Rohan is relieved of his position as chairman. Make sure it's handled discreetly.

"If anyone asks, say it was Rohan's own decision, and that the chamber had no involvement in his plans."

After giving the instructions, Eric closed his eyes again and muttered failed. Rohan will have to suffice as a scapegoat.

himself, 'It seems this plan has

Not long after, Lucas sent Wynter a message. "The targets have been apprehended. They are in the holding cell.

Upon seeing the message, Wynter headed to the door. She straddled her superbike, revved the engine, and sped toward the holding cell.

Arriving at the location, she strode directly toward the room where the two individuals were being held. Inside, Dave and Arwel sat with their legs crossed, their demeanor relaxed and completely oblivious danger inching closer.

the

The door ened, and their gazes landed on

Dave spoke first, sneering "You're that nurse from the hospital. I had a bad feeling about you. If I'd known, I'd have taken care of you earlier."

Wynter smirked disdainfully. "Dream on. Letting you escape from the hospital was my oversight, but this is Cascadia. No matter how far you run, you'll never leave this place."

Dave replied dismissively, "It's just a matter of time. Sooner or later, we'll walk out of here."

"I'm afraid things won't go as you hope. You'll be staying here permanently. But before that, I have a few questions for you," Wynter replied, unfazed by Dave's words.

Dave and Arwel turned their heads away in defiance, clearly unwilling to cooperate.

Unbothered, Wynter began, "I've investigated the both of you. You're from Magota, yet work for Foplya. Based on this alone, Magota will abandon you. Besides, Foplya won't dare openly admit your association. Your escape routes have been cut off."



Hearing this, the two turned their heads back. 'How could you know such classified information?' Wynter pressed on, 'Anything that happens leaves a trail. Now, it's in your best interest to answer my questions. If you cooperate, I can recommend a reduced sentence. You couldn't have pulled off this pandemic alone.'

"Foplya sent someone to assist you, and that person kidnapped my team members. Judging by your ranks, you likely didn't have direct access to that person. But Foplya forced you to obey him, didn't they?"

Dave's previously relaxed demeanor was gone. He didn't know how Wynter found such information. "Will you let us go if I answer your questions?"

Wynter shook her head. "What you've done is unforgivable. Your endings are clear if you refuse to speak- execution, with no one to collect your bodies. But if you choose to cooperate, I can help you earn a chance at atonement.'

Dave sighed, then admitted, "You're right. Foplya did send someone. Specifically, a Cascadian was working with them. I only met him once, back when we dumped monkey carcasses in a mountain village. He seemed almost lifeless."

Wynter's hypothesis aligned with his words. She recalled Layla's account of a man and a healthcare worker discarding the carcasses.

"Why that village? Why not anywhere else?" she pressed.

Dave responded with a scoff, 'He said something about the village having the Essence of the Heavenly Law. Utter nonsense. If Foplya hadn't ordered me to follow his lead, I wouldn't have bothered going there.'

The Essence of the Heavenly Law? Wynter went quiet as she pondered.

After a moment of silence, she asked, "Why is Foplya against Cascadia? What is their goal?"

After a moment of hesitation, Dave revealed, "They wanted to disrupt Cascadia's development and economics, creating an opportunity to exploit."

Wynter nodded thoughtfully. "Do you remember what that person looked like?"

Dave shook his head. "The only thing I remember is that he wore a robe."

"So, your work was arranged by Rohan, and it was also that person who asked him to do so."

Dave nodded.

With this confirmation, Wynter turned toward the door, but Dave called out hastily, "Wait! What about the leniency you mentioned?"

Wynter glanced back. "The minor crimes will be dealt with first. Then, we'll handle the major ones. Everything you've done has struck at Cascadia's core. Do you really think you'll escape death?"

Dave shouted furiously, "You said we'd earn a chance at atonement if I cooperated! I didn't think Cascadia's

leaders would be such liars!"

"Cascadians don't deceive each other. But are you one of us?"

With that, she strode toward her superbike

Before starting the engine, Wynter sent a message on the dark web to her team. 'Bring me the clan leader from the riverside mountain village.'

As she connected the dots about how all the hospitals in Colifernia had been funded through the local Chamber of Commerce, she decided to head to another detention facility.

This one held Rohan. Inside, he was shouting and causing a scene.

When Wynter opened the door and stepped in, a look of unease flashed across his face. 'You... aren't you the Quinnell family's daughter? Don't tell me you've been locked up, too! Serves you right!' he sneered. Wynter pinched the bridge of her nose. She couldn't help but wonder how someone like Rohan could become the Chamber of Commerce's chairman. He lacked both intelligence and composure, completely unfit for his role.

Wynter ignored him and said, "I have a very serious question for you. Are you really the Colifernia Chamber of Commerce's chairman? How could someone like you manage it effectively, let alone keep it running for so long?"

Wynter's words struck a nerve, causing Rohan to snap back, "Of course I'm the chairman! I only got caught because I entered a restricted zone. I'll be out in a few days!"

Wynter calmly placed a stack of documents on the table, sat down, and began to speak. 'You won't be leaving. This entire epidemic only started because you allowed those two foreign doctors into the Willowbrook

Medical Center.

"On top of that, nearly all of Colifernia's hospital investments can be traced back to you. The responsibility lies squarely on your shoulders."

Rohan's face turned pale. Panic set in as he stared at the documents on the table. "No, that's not true! How could I be responsible for the epidemic? There must be a mistake. I demand to see a higher authority!" Wynter realized that it was sometimes truly unfair to compare one person to another. Rohan and Kenton were as different as night and day. She couldn't understand how someone this clueless managed to become the

chairman. "Explanations won't help you now," she said firmly. "For now, enjoy your free meals here-three times a day." Rohan felt his blood run cold. He clenched his teeth as though wanting to say something but hesitated. Just as Wynter was about to leave the room, he blurted out, "Wait! Everything I did was under Mr. Lofstedt's orders! He said investing in hospitals through the chamber would bolster our influence.

"The Willowbrook Medical Center wasn't doing well, so he told me to bring in the two foreign doctors. None of

this was my idea!"

Wynter stopped in her tracks, her eyes narrowing as she turned to face him. 'Mr. Lofstedt?"

"Yes, Mr. Lofstedt! It was all because of his instructions!" Rohan exclaimed.

Taking note of this, Wynter immediately instructed her team to investigate whether anyone in the Chamber

of Commerce went by the name 'Mr. Lofstedt.

Turning back to Rohan, she said coldly, 'I'll investigate thoroughly. You'll stay here for now. You'll bear full responsibility in the end if there's no evidence."

As Wynter reached the doorway, her phone buzzed from a call from Jackson. "How's the situation, Wynter?"

Wynter replied, "The epidemic appears to have been orchestrated by Magota at first glance. But upon closer investigation, the culprits are actually Foplya operatives. They're attempting to steal Cascadia's fortune. "Moreover, there's a figure working with Foplya-a seasoned cultivator. It seems like this plot against Cascadia has been in the works for quite some time."

Jackson's tone became serious. 'Do you have any leads on this cultivator?"

"Perhaps soon," Wynter replied.

"Good. I'll await your update. Foplya... it's time they witnessed Cascadia's might," Jackson said firmly.

Just then, a Special Unit member approached Wynter. 'Ms. Quinnell, we looked into the Chamber of Commerce. There's a man with the nickname 'Mr. Lofstedt,' but he retired some time ago.' Wynter's mind raced as she pieced together the puzzle. The epidemic in Colifernia was a carefully woven plot. Yet, Rohan had made it clear that he wasn't privy to the full picture and had never met this cultivator. However, the entire scheme-whether it was the placement of operatives in hospitals or the dumping of infected monkey carcasses by the river-required someone like the cultivator pull the strings.

This meant the cultivator must have had contact with Eric. Yet, there was no concrete evidence linking him

to these events.

She murmured to herself, "It seems we're dealing with a puppet master operating from the shadows."

Meanwhile, one of Eric's subordinates came to report, 'Someone has been investigating you in the Chamber

of Commerce.\*

Eric nodded calmly, signaling his understanding. "Find an opportunity to silence Rohan."

The subordinate continued, 'Mr. Lofstedt, why haven't we heard from that cultivator who came to see you last

time?"

Eric turned to look at the subordinate. "Don't let curiosity get the better of you about things you're not meant to know."

The subordinate quickly apologized profusely before retreating from the room.

Layla had just prepared some offerings and was about head to the River God's shrine. She refused to believe

that the River God had simply left and held onto the belief that the deity would continue to watch over the

village.

As she stepped out of her home, she encountered the men Wynter sent. 'Good evening. Please come with us. We need to ask you some questions.' Layla took a step back warily. "What does this have to do with me? Why should I-"

Before she could finish, the Special Unit members firmly escorted her away. Their orders were clear-bring

Layla to Wynter Meanwhile, hidden behind a large tree, a man observed the scene. He held a dagger in his hand. Watching

them lead Layla away, he pulled out a phone and made a quick call. "The mission has failed. Someone arrived

before me and took her away."

From the other end of the line, a hoarse, weary voice responded, 'Return immediately. Do not let yourself be

seen.'

The man nodded and slowly backed away, disappearing into the shadows.

Not long after, Layla was brought before Wynter. Upon seeing her, she exclaimed, 'Why is it you? You said you

wouldn't arrest me!"

Wynter replied calmly, 'I need your help to recall something."

She gestured to the person next to her. "This is a sketch artist. I need you to describe the cultivator you saw so

that he can draw him."

Layla was about to claim that she didn't remember when Wynter interrupted her with a stern tone, 'You can

choose to say you don't remember. However, if that's the case, my previous assurances won't stand. Someone,

take her into custody."

Layla panicked. "Wait, wait! I'll talk! I'll try to remember... That cultivator was very old." "What else?" The sketch artist had already prepared a pen and paper, ready to begin.

"He has a lot of wrinkles on his face. When you get close to him, there is this terrible smell. It smells like

something rotten. But his eyes were different-they were deep and piercing, like he could see right through

you.

"His hair was completely white." Then, she paused to think. 'And his voice-it was heavy, like he carried a lot of sorrow. His posture was hunched, but his movements didn't match someone his age."

Wynter nodded. "Take a seat and try to think if there's anything else you can remember."

The artist began sketching based on her description, each stroke carefully capturing the details. A short while

later, the artist handed over the completed drawing to Wynter. One of her team members took one look at the sketch and immediately frowned. "Boss, isn't this-