

## Chapter 2

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April 4th, 2025. Sunny. The 94th day after my death.

My family waited all night, but I never came home. Anxious, they started pacing inside the house.

"That ungrateful brat! She gets thrown out, and now she thinks she's tough? She won't even pick up the phone!" Dad yelled. His temper flared, and he smashed his phone onto the floor. It hit the wooden floor with a thud, leaving a big dent.

I flinched. If I had been there, it would've definitely hit me.

Mom started to panic. Caleb was still in the hospital waiting for both a marrow match and the money for his treatment. "Maybe she heard we want her to donate marrow to Caleb and decided to hide."

"Should we go to her school and look for her?" Ruby suggested.

This idea immediately united my parents. They wasted no time heading out in Dad's SUV.

"What kind of sister acts like this? Her brother's about to die, and she's hiding? I'll catch her at school and show her what happens when she pulls a stunt like this!"

...

Dad's SUV sped down the road. Mom was in the passenger seat, and Ruby was in the back, scrolling through her phone.

She posted a photo on Instagram with the caption, "Jolene, where are you? We're your family! Come home." The picture showed a pale Caleb lying in a hospital bed, with Ruby holding a bouquet of flowers.

The whole family was in the photo, and their faces were full of concern.

I hovered next to Ruby and peered at her phone. Ruby was a well-known influencer with hundreds of thousands of followers. Soon, her post was flooded with likes. Most comments were asking what had happened.

Ruby replied, "Our brother has leukemia and urgently needs a bone marrow transplant. I hope Jolene will come home and face this bravely."

Then, she deleted the comment.

The message spread like wildfire. Before long, the whole town was looking for the cowardly sister—me.

I read the furious and indignant comments on Ruby's phone with a sense of indifference. I actually wished they would find me.

I had never had the privilege of sitting in Dad's car before. The black leather seats looked so soft. I wanted to feel them, but my arm just passed right through.

Dad's SUV had four seats, but none of them were for me.

It was also the first time my parents had ever gone to my school. Usually, my grandma, Fiona Schneider, attended the parent-teacher meetings.

Dad thought I wasn't as pretty or as smart as Ruby. He even doubted I was his child because my face was round, and my eyes weren't big enough or beautiful enough. I was quiet and withdrawn as well.

As for Mom, it was worse. She had almost died giving birth to me. Every time she looked at me, it reminded her of that painful experience.

Soon, we arrived at the school.

The elderly security guard was dozing off when they knocked on the window. After a few knocks, he slowly opened his eyes.

"We're Jolene Newman's parents. Could you please open the gate?" Dad asked.

The guard eyed the three of them and frowned. He was irritated. The school had been closed for a while due to the snow. Besides...

"Jolene doesn't have parents. She only had her grandma, who passed away six months ago. If you want to lie, at least try pretending to be her uncle and aunt. That'd be more believable."

The guard was suspicious, as there had been a string of thefts around town. He wondered if these strangers were trying to sneak into the school to steal something.

"She cursed us, calling us dead? That wicked ingrate! I'm her mother! Get her out here now!" Mom immediately flew into a rage. My school was a boarding school, and she knew I usually stayed holed up in my dorm room.

"Then tell me. Which class is she in? Who's her homeroom teacher?" The guard hesitated when he saw her twisted expression and how serious she seemed. However, he stuck to his duty and decided to take down some information.

"Ruby, do you know which class she's in?" Mom asked.