

The Heiress Revived from the Ashes

The Heiress Revived 321

Chapter 321 Coming Home

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Felix's throat felt like it was being crushed by **an** invisible force. It was so dry he couldn't make a sound, and **the** sorrow in his chest surged wildly.

He looked into his daughter's clear, bright eyes—so full of hope—and it felt like a thousand steel needles. were stabbing straight into his heart.

He couldn't bear to tell her the cruel truth **that** her mother was gone.

But lying to her? That was something he couldn't do either.

Felix stood silent for a long time before he **finally** forced out the words. "Sweetheart, your mom's gone. somewhere really far away. But she's up in the sky **now watching** over you. Her biggest wish was for you to grow up happy

The little girl seemed to sort of understand. She nodded, a flicker of sadness passing through her eyes, But soon, she smiled brightly **and** chirped, "Then Daddy, let's go home now!"

Seeing her so sweet and thoughtful made Felix's eyes turn red. He gently pulled her close, her **tiny** frame. fitting perfectly against his chest.

Maybe it was a natural bond between father and daughter, because even though Felix was doing everything he could to hold back his grief, she still sensed it

She reached up with a small hand and gently patted his head. "Don't cry, Daddy. When you cry, I feel really sad too."

Her **words** made his heart ache even more. "Okay. I won't cry. I'll take you home now."

He bent down to lift her up, but the little girl suddenly said, "Daddy, I haven't said goodbye to Mr. Josh

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Felix paused, then turned and walked into Josh's house,

The air inside reeked of alcohol, but everything was clean and tidy.

Felix had no idea that during the days his daughter had stayed here, this two-year-old had been heartbreakingly mature—quietly tidying up every day and trying her best to take care of a broken-down

Josh.

He found Josh slumped on the floor, hollow and lifeless, like all the soul had been drained from **his** body.

Felix sighed heavily. “Josh, life has to move on. I’m giving you three days to pull yourself together. Come back to work after that. Maybe staying busy will help you forget the pain.”

Josh slowly looked up, his eyes as empty as a dried-up well—completely lifeless

His lips parted slightly, like he wanted to say something But in the end, he swallowed the words and said. nothing

Felix walked over with the child in his **arms**. She wriggled free and padded over to Josh, reaching out a tiny hand to touch his face. “Mr. Josh, you gotta get better soon, okay? My daddy came to get me.”

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Chapter 321 Coming Home

Felix walked over and gave Josh a gentle pat on the shoulder.

“It’s a long story. She’s mine and Lauren’s. I’ll explain everything properly another time.”

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After they left Josh’s place, Felix clutched his daughter tightly, terrified that if he let go, she’d vanish into

thin air.

The car sped down the road toward home. Nancy curled up in Felix’s arms, eyes wide with wonder **as** she explored **the** inside of the car, letting out little gasps of amazement now and then.

Watching her so lively and full of curiosity, some of the gloom that had weighed on Felix for days finally began to lift.

The Brooker **family** estate.

The moment they stepped through the gate, Kate and Anna came rushing out.

When Felix told them the child was his and Lauren's, both women froze where they stood, stunned. Their eyes widened in disbelief, like they were hearing something completely impossible.

Kate covered her mouth as her eyes welled with tears. Anna stood there, struggling to process what she'd just heard.

After Gael explained everything that had happened, Kate felt like her heart was being torn **apart**—stabbed by a thousand needles.

She staggered toward the child and slowly knelt down. Looking at the little girl, who looked so much like Lauren, Kate couldn't hold back her tears any longer.

She opened her arms, voice trembling. "Sweetheart, come to me."

The girl looked nervously at Felix. He gave her a reassuring nod, and only then did she walk over to Kate..

Kate hugged her tightly, as if cradling the most precious thing in the world, pouring all her love into that embrace.

She murmured over and over, "What a cruel world... How much did Lauren suffer? And how much has our little girl already been through?"

The girl blinked her big, shiny eyes, watching the old **woman** cry. She reached out and gently wiped away her tears. "Don't cry, Grandma. I'll be really good. I can wash clothes, cook, and clean the house. I won't ever make you worry."

Kate sobbed even harder, her tears falling like a flood. Yes, yes, our little girl is the sweetest, the strongest.

Chapter 322 Her Name Is Nancy

Once she'd calmed down a bit, Kate gently asked, "Sweetheart, what's your name?"

The little girl lit up with a bright smile and chirped, "My name is Wench!"

The moment she said it, the air in the room turned heavy. Everyone's face darkened instantly,

A flash of anger passed through Kate's eyes. Her jaw clenched, and her hands balled in to fists without her even **realizing**.

But when she looked at the girl's innocent little face, she forced down the fury boiling in her chest. Her voice stayed soft as she said, "Sweetheart, that's not a very nice name. Let's not use that one anymore, okay? I'll give you a new name. Would you like that?"

"Yes, yes!" The girl clapped her **hands** excitedly.

Kate turned to Felix with a questioning look.

Felix paused for a moment, Lauren's smile flashing through his mind. He nodded firmly. "Nancy."

That name held all of his longing for Lauren—and his Hope that their daughter would always remember her mother.

Kate looked back at the child in her arms **and** said gently, "From now on, your name is Nancy. Nancy, okay?"

The girl nodded hard, her eyes curving into crescent moons. "Okay! I like the name Nancy. It sounds way better than that old one."

She smiled with pure joy, showing off her tiny, uneven baby teeth.

Everyone around her smiled too—but beneath the smiles was a deep, aching sadness.

In the days that followed, the Brooker household felt like it had come back to life. Nancy's arrival brought a fresh, vibrant energy that none of them even realized they'd been missing.

Every day, the old lady played with Nancy and taught her how to read and write.

Anna whipped up all kinds of delicious treats for her. Nancy's favorites were the little pastries Anna-made

-she'd gobble them up until her round little belly stuck out.

Felix threw himself back into work with new purpose. Every evening, without fail, he rushed home the moment he got off, just to be with Nancy.

He told her bedtime stories, took her for walks in the garden. Day by day, he watched her grow more cheerful, more lively. Her skin brightened, she put on a little weight, and she looked so much healthier than before.

Two years flew by just like that.

Nancy was now four years old—**just** the right age to start preschool..

Felix personally dropped her off and picked her up every single day, rain or shine.

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Chapter 322 Her Name Is **Nancy**

That afternoon, the kids were getting out of school.

Parents stood in line, smiling as they **picked** up their children one by one.

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Soon, everyone had gone home—except for Nancy. She stood quietly by her teacher's side, not crying, not fussing.

The young teacher bent down and asked softly, "Nancy, are your legs tired from standing? Do you want me to carry you?"

Nancy looked up with her chubby little face, her big **eyes** turning into crescent **moons** as she grinned. "You don't need to carry me, Teacher. You'd get tired too."

The teacher's heart just about melted on the spot.

She adored this **sweet** little girl. She's so thoughtful and polite—just what you'd expect from the daughter of Brooker Corporation's CEO.

Suddenly, a **woman** appeared in front of Nancy

Her eyes were wild. Without a word, she lunged forward and yanked Nancy into her arms, muttering as she held her tight, "Lauren, my Lauren... I knew you were waiting for me. I'm here, baby, I'm taking you home."

The teacher screamed, "Who are you? Let go of Nancy"

She rushed over and tried to pull Nancy back, but the woman's grip was like a **vice**. No matter how hard the teacher tugged, she wouldn't let go.

fancy was terrified. Her little face went pale, her eyes wide with fear.

“I’m not Lauren, I’m Nancy.” Her voice trembled, thick with tears and panic. “I’m Nancy! Let go of me!”

She struggled with all her might, arms and legs flailing, but the woman’s arms were locked around her like steel bars.

“You are Lauren! You’re my daughter!” the woman cried, her voice cracking. “You look just like her. You are her!”

There was something unhinged in her eyes—obsessive, terrifying.

Her fingernails dug deep into Nancy’s arms, leaving angry red marks.

Nancy might’ve been a thoughtful child, but she was still just a little girl. The pain was too much.

She burst into tears.

“Daddy! Grandma! Help me! I’m **scared!**”

The teacher was beside herself. She stomped her foot and shouted, “Security! Someone help! She’s trying to take a child!”

The school’s security guards came running at the sound of her voice and quickly surrounded the woman.

“Let go of her! Now!” one of the guards barked.

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Chapter 322 Her Name is Nancy

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But the woman didn’t even flinch. She clutched Nancy even tighter, eyes wild with desperation.

“You can’t take her away from me! She’s my daughter—he’s all I have! I won’t lose her **again!** Lauren. baby, don’t cry. I’m here. This time, I’ll protect you. No one’s taking you away ever again!”

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Chapter 323 The Past That Wouldn't Let Go

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"It's all my fault," the woman sobbed. "I didn't protect you. That's why the bad people took you away."

Nancy's tears wouldn't stop. Her little hands clutched the woman's clothes, trembling. "I don't know you! Let me go! I want my daddy, I want my grandma!"

Pain clouded the woman's eyes. "No, you're my daughter. Let's go home, okay? We'll be together forever."

As she held Nancy tighter, struggling to keep hold of her, Felix arrived at the preschool.

From a distance, he saw his daughter being held in a stranger's arms, her face pale, screaming and crying in terror—and his heart clenched painfully,

His eyes filled with fury. Without **a word**, he charged forward, grabbed the woman's arm, and twisted it hard.

She let out a blood-curdling scream as her balance gave out.

Felix effortlessly pulled Nancy into his arms. Then, without **hesitation**, he kicked the crazeman across the pavement.

Nancy threw her arms around his neck and cried even harder. "Daddy. I'm scared!"

"It's okay, baby. You're safe now. It's all my fault. I got here too late." Felix gently rubbed her back, trying to

calm her down.

Nancy loosened her grip and looked up at him. Her tear-streaked face was full of sadness, **but** her gaze held something firm. "You're the best daddy ever. The best in the **whole** world."

Felix's heart softened. He pressed a kiss to her forehead "I promise—I'll never be late again."

"Okay." Nancy buried her face in Felix's chest, still sniffing softly.

His heart ached with every sob. He'd protected this little girl like a treasure for the past two years, and she'd never once cried like this. But today, a madwoman had terrified her to the point of sobbing.

He turned and looked at the woman sprawled on the **ground**. When he got a clear look at her face, his expression froze.

It **was** Lauren's mother—Alice.

Alice scrambled to reach toward the child in his arms. "Lauren.... my Lauren...

Felix's mouth twisted into a cold sneer. Love that comes too late isn't worth a thing.

Back when Lauren was being tormented by the Bennetts—humiliated again and again—Alice never **once** stepped in to protect her.

Now, with Lauren long gone, she suddenly showed up, mistaking Nancy for her dead daughter. **This** so-called motherly love, arriving so late, was disgusting—

"Someone take her **back** to the psychiatric hospital. I don't ever want to see her **again**."

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Chapter 323 The Past That Wouldn't Let Go

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"No! I won't go back! I want my daughter! I just want n Lauren!" Alice shrieked, snot and tears running down her face.

Her eyes locked on Nancy. "Lauren, come home with e, please? Mommy misses you so much. I miss you more than **anything**."

Nancy trembled in Felix's **arms**, burying her face deeper into his chest.

Felix carried her to the car and got in.

"Don't go! Give me back my daughter!" **Alice** thrashed wildly as the car pulled away.

Terror filled her eyes. "Don't take my daughter away! She's mine!"

Gael scoffed coldly. "Your daughter died two years ago.

"No! That's a lie! You're lying! My daughter can't be dead! She's alive, she has to be. She's going to live a long, happy life!"

Alice's whole body shook. Her mind unraveled. She kept whispering Lauren's name over and over, clinging to a reality that no longer existed.

It was a pitiful sight—disheveled, lost in grief. But Gael felt no sympathy as he forced her back to the psychiatric hospital.

“Mr. Felix said to make sure she never gets out **again**.”

The director nodded quickly. “Don’t worry. We’ll keep her locked in for good.”

After Gael left, Alice was shackled with chains. For the rest of her life, they were never taken off.

She spent her remaining days bound in regret and grief haunted by the name she could never let go of

Lauren.

Ten years later.

Fourteen-year-old Nancy was now a bright, confident high schooler.

At just fourteen, she already stood nearly five—**foot**—sever

Unlike Lauren, who had returned to the Bennett family small and frail despite having tall parents, Nancy had clearly taken after the Brooker side—tall, strong, radiant.

The tragedies that had once scarred Lauren never touched Nancy.

She was the beloved jewel of the Brooker family. And even though she grew up without a mother, she never lacked love for a single moment.

People always **said** I was cold and distant, hard to **get close** to.

But what they didn’t know was—before I turned five, I used to be cheerful, talkative, always laughing....

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The Heiress Revived from the Ashes.

Chapter

324 The One I Couldn’t Let Go.

At school or at home. I was always the **kind** of kid everyone liked.

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But after my mother died—
and my father shamelessly brought that mistress into our home—
everything changed. After I turned five, I became quiet, Withdrawn. **Dark.**

Back then. I was still too young to know how to hide my emotions. Faced purely on instinct, saying whatever I felt, doing whatever I **wanted**.

If I even felt the slightest annoyance, I took it all out on my father's mistress.

I pushed her down the stairs once. She lost the baby she was carrying

I even held a knife to her once **and** said, "I'm **a** minor. Even if I kill you, I won't go **to jail**.
"

That woman hated me **with** every bone in her body. If she could've killed me and gotten away with it, she would've done it without blinking.

She'd assumed dealing with a five-year-old would be child's play. What she never expected was that I, a literal child, knew **how** to weaponize my age and become something terrifying.

From that moment on, she started flinching whenever she saw me—
like a rat spotting a cat.

Even my father was afraid of me.

He knew I wasn't bluffing. I really would do the things I said.

At the time, it was pure instinct. I just wanted to protect myself. No matter the **cost**.

If someone hurt me, I'd make sure they paid for it—even if I died trying.

Maybe that was why, despite having such a vicious stepmother, I was never once abused.

I grew up without a scratch.

Over time, the sharp edges of my personality dulled. I learned how to keep my emotions in check.

Eventually, people started calling me calm. Mature.

On the surface, I came off as gentle and polite. But deep down, I knew: when it came to enemies, I'd never show mercy.

My father's mistress, the one who used to tremble in fear when I was a child, grew even more terrified of me as I got older.

I thought life would just keep flowing quietly like that, neventful, steady.

That was before I came to Hoverdale—
and met the most important **person** of my life: Lauren.

Meeting her changed everything. She showed me just how cruel the world could be to one person.

I still remember the first time I saw **her**.

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Chapter 324 The One i Couldn't Let Go

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She looked so fragile, **like** a gust of wind could knock her over. And yet, she looked me straight in the eye and asked me for a cigarette.

Back then, I **never** could've guessed how deeply our lives would intertwine. I never imagined fate could be so strange—
how it would keep bringing us together, over and over again.

And every time I saw her, she was in some kind of mess Battered. Bruised. Helpless.

I was never the type to care about others—
especially not women. I had no patience for them.

But she was different.

Maybe it was her story. The way she'd suffered. Maybe it just made me feel **something** I hadn't felt **in** a long time—pity.

That pity, though, was like a spark. It lit up a growing urge to know more about her.

And by the time I'd uncovered everything—
by the time I truly understood what she'd been through—I realized something else.

I'd already fallen for her.

She was like a rare gem sculpted by heaven itself—flawless in every way.

Smart. Talented. **Kind**. She was a natural at everything studying, embroidery, you **name** it.

She had the makings of someone great. If she hadn't been thrown away by David, if she'd grown up in a powerful family like the Bennetts, raised with care **and** given a proper education, she could've become someone incredible. Someone who'd change the world

But Sharon and George—
they crushed her. For their own selfish reasons, they destroyed an innocent girl's entire life.

I felt nothing but heartbreak for her. And sometimes, a deep frustration.

Her only weakness was her soft heart.

I hated how kind she was. Hated how, after everything, **she** still went back to the Bennetts and bowed her head just to chase some illusion of family love.

If only she'd let go of that fantasy... If she'd stopped trying to earn their approval. If she'd fought back when they hurt her...

Maybe things would've ended differently.

Out of all the women I've met **in** nearly thirty years, she was the most **unforgettable**.

And really—how could anyone not fall for someone like her?

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Chapter 325 The Life That Should Have Been Hers.

Finished

Maybe it was because she was too normal that she made the Bennetts look **all** the more deranged.

It **was** like dropping a sane person into a madhouse. Every day inside that family was a form of torture.

She spent fifteen long years in an orphanage. **Then**, after being brought back to the Bennetts, she endured three years of humiliation. And later, five brutal years behind bars.

In just twenty—
three short years of life, she hadn't had single day of true happiness. Not one moment free of pain.

Every time I think about what she went through, my chest tightens like it's being cut open.

After she was gone, I walked around like a ghost. I couldn't eat. Couldn't sleep.

Not even when my mother passed had I ever fallen apart like that.

I used to think someone as cold-blooded **as** me would forget her **quickly**.

But a month went by... **and** her memory didn't fade. It only grew stronger. Her face, her voice, everything about her took root in me—
and the ache of missing her ran deeper by the day.

I'd stand in the living room, my eyes always drifting to the couch by the window.

Back when she was still alive. Lauren loved to lie there and sunbathe.

She was so frail that she'd often fall asleep without even realizing it.

Her small, thin frame curled up on that couch made her look even smaller.

The sunlight spilling across her body would seem to pass right through her skin, casting a golden glow all

around her.

I used to just stand there, watching her for what felt like hours.

And in those moments, everything inside me felt peaceful. Like nothing else in the world mattered.

But I'd never see that again.

That first month without her felt like hell. Every second dragged, sharp and unbearable,

I honestly believed I might never make it out of that darkness.

Then I found out—she **and** I had a daughter.

It **hit** me like lightning

We'd only kissed once. That was the most intimate we ever gotten.

No more than that.

And yet, somehow, we had a child together.

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Chapter 325 The Life That Should Have Been Hers

child **had** already come into the world.

I named her Nancy. In honor of Lauren.

And from that moment on, I **had** a reason to live again.

I never really liked **kids**. But I loved Nancy.

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Finished

Maybe it was because she looked just like **her** mother. Or maybe it was the blood bond between father and daughter. I couldn't say for sure.

But I loved her.

As the years passed. Nancy grew—into someone more and more like Lauren.

She inherited Lauren's beauty, but she was taller, more striking.

She inherited Lauren's brilliance too, but unlike her mother, she had the fortune to finish college and go on to take over Brooker Corporation.

I watched her grow, pouring every ounce of love I had into her. All the care and warmth Lauren -I gave it all to Nancy.

If only we had another life to try again.

ever got

I wish I'd met Lauren sooner. I wish I could've protected her, loved her, and made sure no one ever hurt her again.

She had so much talent, so much heart. If she'd grown up in a happy home, with the support she deserved... her future would've been boundless.

Fifty years have passed.

I'm nearly eighty now. My body's failing. The days feel shorter. My breath thinner.

I sit quietly in the garden, rocking slowly in my chair, clutching the embroidery she made—the one titled Queen of Blooms.

The sun warms my face. I slowly open my cloudy eyes.

And in that blur of light, I see her again—twenty—three years old, still smiling that sweet, radiant smile. She holds out her hand to me and says gently,

“Mr. Felix, I’ve come to take you home.”

I smile too.

Without

No hold on.

lation, I reach for her and wrap my fingers tightly around hers, using the **last** of my strength

With a heavy groan, the **prison** gates creaked

Ellior stenned our his buzz-cut silver at the temples he movements stiff and slow

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Chapter 325 The Life That Should Have Been Hers

The bright sunlight **hit** his eyes, forcing them into a squint.

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Ten years behind bars **had** blurred the world outside. It was familiar, yet distant—like stepping into a dream you couldn’t wake from.

His thoughts drifted, unbidden, back to a decade ago.

Back when he’d stood in front of this very prison gate mug and self-satisfied, waiting for Lauren to come

Back when he’d accused her of **faking** her limp—**and** ridiculed her without holding back.

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Chapter 326 What Was Left Behind

Back then, he had brushed off her five years in prison like it was nothing.

But now, after losing his own freedom, Elliot finally understood what that kind of suffocating torment really felt like.

He looked up,

The street, the trees, the sky—
everything looked just at always had. And yet, to him, it all felt bleak and hollow.

He remembered how, years ago, he had stood outside this **very prison**, waiting for Lauren with a **smug**

smile.

But now, as he stepped out, there was no one waiting for **him**.

The gates had opened to emptiness.

The cold wind of loneliness blew straight into his chest

Elliot wandered down the road like a sleepwalker,
feet dragging beneath him, subconsciously heading toward what used to be home.

Before he knew it, he reached an intersection. The light turned red, and he stopped.

His gaze drifted.

A sleek black Rolls—
Royce rolled slowly past. Through the tinted window, he caught a glimpse of a teenage girl in a Hoverdale High uniform.

She **had** a high ponytail and soft, pale skin. There was still a touch of baby fat in her cheeks. Her eyes were wide, and her face glowed with youthful energy.

She was beautiful—but what caught Elliot's attention wasn't her beauty.

It was the fact that she **looked** exactly like Lauren.

His pupils constricted,

He instinctively broke **into** a run, shouting, "Lauren-

But the car sped away before he could even get close.

Elliot stopped, breathless, and let out a bitter laugh.

What was I thinking?

Lauren had been twenty—
three when he went to prison Ten years had passed. She'd be thirty—
three by now. There was no way she could look that young.

That girl couldn't have been more than twelve or thirteen.

Inside the Rolls—
Royce, Nancy glanced in the rearview mirror and frowned. "Dad, that man back there...
I

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Chapter 326 What Was Left Behind

Felix's eyes narrowed slightly, a dangerous gleam flickering in his gaze.

"Probably just mistaken her for someone else," he said flatly.

Ten years.

It really had been ten years—long enough for **even** Elliot to be **released**.

Finished

Elliot walked for over three hours before **finally** arriving at the Bennett estate.

But **when** he reached the gate, he froze.

The place was unrecognizable.

The iron gates were rusted over. The yard was overrun with weeds. The flowerbeds, once neatly trimmed, had grown wild and tangled.

The outer walls of the house were cracked, paint peeling where no one had bothered to maintain them.

Looking at **what** used to be home, Elliot felt his stomach drop.

What happened to this place?

Where were his parents?

Where was Lauren?

In all the years he'd spent in prison, not a single person had come to see him.

He had no idea what had happened out here while he was gone.

And now, having experienced what it **was** like to be completely forgotten, he finally understood what Lauren must have felt that day—sitting silently in **the** passenger **seat**, coldly telling him how not one family member had visited her in five years.

A bitter taste filled **his** mouth.

He **took** a deep breath, trying to steady himself, and slowly pushed open the rusted gate.

It creaked painfully—long, sharp **groans** that echoed through the stillness.

Inside, the house was exactly as he remembered it... yet somehow completely different.

Nothing had **moved**. The furniture, the decorations—they were all in their places.

But everything **was** coated in a thick layer of dust.

Ten years ago, this place had been **spotless**.

Now it was a graveyard.

"Where is everyone?" he muttered into the silence. "Where's Mom? Dad? Lauren?"

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Chapter 326 What Was Left Behind

His voice bounced off the walls, unanswered.

He walked through the house, taking it all in.

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Every room was a monument to a life that no longer existed. His parents' bedroom still held their things, only now blanketed in dust. His own room, too—frozen in time, yet **unfamiliar**.

At **last**, he found **himself** outside what had once been Lauren's room.

The storage room.

He remembered the last time he'd been in there—
seeing her awards, her Northcrest University acceptance letter.

That day, the guilt had overwhelmed him. He'd thrown up blood.

He'd seen the journal she'd left behind. But he hadn't cared open it. He hadn't had the strength.

Now, ten years later, everything in the **storage** room was exactly the same.

The folding bed. The old desk. The cluttered corners piled high with forgotten things.

Frozen in time.

Like a crime scene no one had touched.

Chapter 327 The Diary She Left Behind

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He slowly walked up to the desk and pulled open the drawer. The diary was still there, tucked neatly inside.

Elliot picked it up and sat on **the** old folding bed, **gently** turning to the first page.

The paper had yellowed with time, but the handwriting was still perfectly clear.

His fingers brushed over the page, as if trying to feel what Lauren must have felt when she first wrote those words.

June 12th, 2007. Friday. Sunny

I have a mom and dad now. And a super handsome brother who's a CEO.

They came to the orphanage today and brought me home.

I used to be a nobody: No one loved me. No one wanted me. But now I'm the real daughter of the Bennett family. It *feels* like I'm dreaming.

For as long as I can remember, I've always wished for parents I never thought *my* wish would actually come true.

My dad is tall and dignified. Even though he's older, he's still really handsome—like one of those classy older guys in

the movies

My mom is elegant and gorgeous, with the kind of figure you only see in magazines. *She* dresses so well. She's stunning and rich.

And my brother... he inherited everything great from them. He's basically perfect.

I feel so lucky to *be* part of the Bennett family.

Elliot's mind drifted.

The scene from that day came flooding back, painfully vivid—sunlight pouring down, the car pulling into the orphanage courtyard, Lauren standing near the entrance with a nervous look on her face.

She'd been wearing a faded old shirt. Her hair was messy. Her expression was timid, but full of hope. Elliot remembered the way he'd furrowed his brow at the sight of her. The disdain in his voice.

"She's so short. **And** she looks sickly. Are you guys **sure** she's one of us? Honestly, she just looks... poor. I don't see the resemblance."

He hadn't even tried to be subtle. He'd said it loud enough for her to hear—on purpose. Just to put her in her place.

Her face had gone red in an instant. She'd looked down at her shoes, frozen and **helpless**.

She didn't argue. Didn't explain. She just quietly followed them into the car.

The entire ride home, she sat still **as a** board, like she was afraid even **breathing** too loudly **would** set him off again.

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Chapter 327 The Diary She Left Behind

Later, she stood in front of their mansion, gazing up at it with wide eyes.

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#Finished

This is my home now? I get to live in a place like this? Mom, Dad, Brother... I feel so lucky. It's like I'm

dreaming."

He'd sneered at her excitement. "**You really** act like you've never seen anything in your life. It's just a house. You think this means you've made it? You came here for the money, didn't you? Let me be clear- this house is in my mom's **name**. Even if it changes hands someday, it's going to Willow. Not you. **Don't** get any ideas,"

Lauren's **face** went pale. Her eyes dimmed with hurt.

She lowered her head and said softly. "I'm not here for the money. I just... wanted a **family**."

He had just snorted and looked away.

And now—sitting here in **that** same dusty little room—those memories cut deeper than any blade.

All the little things he'd brushed off back then... they hit him now like a series of punches to the gut.

He finally understood: every smile she'd ever given them was laced with quiet heartbreak. Every kind gesture had been an attempt to fit in—a plea for acceptance.

And he had only ever pushed her further away.

"Lauren... I was so wrong," he whispered. And for the first time in years, tears rolled freely down his face.

It took a long while before he could bring himself to keep reading.

June 13th, 2007. Saturday. Overcast.

Today was my first day living at the Bennett house.

Since it was Saturday, I woke up early and made breakfast for everyone. I wanted so badly to fit in... I really hoped they'd like what I made.

But I never expected that Willow would be allergic to something in the food. She broke out in a rash all over her body.

Dad, Mom, and my brother didn't even ask what happened. They just yelled at me—really harshly. The way they

looked at me... like they hated me.

I was so sad. But I know it was my fault. Willow got sick because of me.

So even when they scolded me, I didn't argue. I didn't fight back.

I believe if I keep treating them with love, they'll eventually change their minds about me .

458

Chapter 328 The Weight of Regret

The events of that day replayed vividly in Elliot's mind.

Finished

He remembered Willow's face breaking out in red hive—and his fury erupting like wildfire. He'd stormed over to Lauren and shoved her hard.

She'd been so **frail** that **even** that light push sent her crashing into the dining **table**.

Dishes flew off and shattered on the ground.

Lauren fell into the shards, her hands slicing **open** as blood spilled **across** the floor.

But he hadn't **shown** a shred of concern. Instead, he'd yelled at her, face twisted with rage.

"I barely pushed you! Don't pretend you fell—your little tricks don't fool us! You hurt Willow, and now you're trying to frame me? What, hoping Mom and Dad turn against us so you can inherit everything, yourself? You're disgusting!"

Lauren's eyes filled with tears. She shook her head desperately. I didn't-

"Don't call me that," he snapped. "I don't have a scheming sister like you. As far **as** I'm concerned, Willow is my only sibling."

He didn't even glance at Lauren's bleeding hands. He just scooped up Willow and rushed out the door with their parents, headed straight for the hospital.

They didn't come home until late that night.

By the time they returned, the dining room had already been cleaned, every trace of the accident scrubbed away.

Lauren was sitting on the couch in the living room, waiting.

The **moment** she saw them, she got up and walked over concern etched across her face. “Is Willow okay? Did the doctor say she’s alright?”

But all he could see was her pretending to care.

His father’s expression was ice cold. “If you’re really sorry for what happened to Willow, then kneel here all night. Anyone can say sorry. I want to see action. **And** if you’re not willing, then go

The Bennett family has no place for **someone** who’d hurt her own sister.”

Lauren’s eyes darkened with despair. But she bit down hard, nodded, and slowly dropped to her knees.

“I’m sorry... I know I **made** a mistake. I’ll reflect on it.”

Elliot stared at her kneeling there and felt nothing.

No guilt. No pity.

Only disdain.

He scoffed, “What **a** show.”

1/3

21:51 Wed, Apr 16 G.

Chapter 328 The Weight of Regret

Then he turned and went upstairs,

He assumed she’d sneak back to her room once they were asleep.

D5%

Finished

But the next morning, when he came **downstairs**, she was still there—collapsed on the living room floor, her skin pale and her body burning with fever.

And what did he do?

He sneered.

“Don’t think making yourself sick will get our attention You came from an orphanage—you’re used to playing dinky to get sympathy. You think I can’t see right through you? I’m the CEO of Bennett Corporation, not an idiot. If you want to fake being unconscious, fine. Let’s see how long you can keep it up. Someone throw her outside. She can stay in the **yard**.”

It rained **that** day.

Lauren lay outside for over an hour before Marilyn, unable to watch any longer, begged for permission to bring her back inside.

If he remembered right, Lauren developed pneumonia after that. She’d already been weak, and kneeling for so long **had** made her worse. The pneumonia turned into white lung, **and** the hospital even issued a critical condition notice.

His father had panicked then. Called in the best doctors. Ordered the best medication.

At the time, Elliot thought it **was** because his father loved her.

But now he knew—it was because if Lauren died, there’d be no kidney donor for Willow.

Elliot sat on the folding bed, the diary slipping from his hands to the floor.

His fists clenched, knuckles turning white.

Tears slid silently down his cheeks, soaking the yellowed paper below.

“Lauren... I’m sorry... I was wrong... Where are you?” His voice trembled, barely a whisper.

Back **then**, everything he’d done to Lauren had felt justified—he was protecting Willow. That was all that mattered.

It had never occurred to **him that what** he was doing what he had allowed to happen—was sheer cruelty toward a fifteen-year-old girl.

And this **was** just the second day she’d returned home,

For the next three years, things like **this** kept happening **over** and over.

Now, it felt like something was squeezing the life out of his chest. He couldn’t breathe.

His face was twisted in pain, his brow locked tight. Sweat beaded on his forehead and mixed with the tears. streaming down his face.

Even in prison. the vivid routine had **helped**

chronic stomach condition. **Bur** now, a sharm

2/3

21:52 Wed, Apr 16 G.

Chapter 328 The Weight of Regret

stabbing **pain** ripped through his abdomen—just like the time his ulcer had bled.

The agony **was** unbearable.

He collapsed onto the bed, curling up tightly, clutching the diary to his chest.

Tears of regret streamed from his eyes as he choked on the same five words, again and **again**.

“Lauren... I’m sorry... I’m sorry...”

7 458



65%

Chapter 329 Never Truly Wanted

Elliot had no idea how long it took for the pain in his gut to finally settle.

By then, he was drenched in cold **sweat**, completely drained, his limbs limp **and** lifeless .

65%=

Finished

Still, he forced himself to sit **back** up. His fingers trembled as he turned to the next page of the diary.

June 20th, 2007. **Sunday**. Overcast.

I spent a week in the hospital. Today, I got to come home.

These p

past few days, I've felt hurt. Disappointed. But watching Mom and Dad rush around for me, afraid something might happen... I softened.

At the orphanage, no **one** cared when we got sick. We just had to wait it out, alone, in our beds. You survived or you didn't. That **was** it.

These people—my family—they were the first to care whether I lived or died.

Yes, they've hurt me. Deeply. But even so, I found myself wanting to hold onto the tiny bits of warmth they showed me.

I told myself that hearts are made of flesh. If I treated them with kindness long enough, maybe one day they'd truly treat me like **family** too.

So I was excited. I couldn't wait to go home—even if it meant going back to a place that had hurt me. I still hoped I could belong.

I bought little gifts **for** everyone, using the **scholarship** money I'd saved. I thought maybe, just maybe, it'd make them happy. Maybe it'd bring us closer. Maybe they'd finally accept me.

But when I handed out the gifts, Elliot looked **at** the tie picked for him.... and without hesitation, threw it straight into the trash.

"You think I'd wear that cheap garbage? You want me to be laughed out of the office?" he **said** coldly, "**Don't give** me this useless junk. It's **disgusting**."

Mom and Dad gave the presents a passing glance. The expressions were complicated—hard to read—but somehow, I understood the message in their eyes:

Cheap. Tacky.

They were right, I guess.

I am tacky. I'm **poor**. My **scholarship** money couldn't buy luxury items. But I gave everything I had. I tried so hard to be kind to them.

That moment felt like being **stabbed** by a hundred needles. It hurt so badly.

What more could I do? How could I **make** them **see** me as part of the family?

Maybe I should never have come back.

1/2

Chapter 329 Never Truly Wanted.

June 21st, 2007. Monday. Light rain.

I got punished again today.

I'm starting to think... maybe this really isn't my home. Maybe it never was.

I

Before leaving for school this morning, I wrote a **note**

If you don't want me here. I'll go back to the orphanag

Finished

If there's no love, then let's stop **torturing** each other. I've lived **in** loneliness before. That's easier **than** being looked at like I'm dumb every single day.

I left for school in a fog. I couldn't focus all day. My mind was stuck replaying every little thing that had happened at home.

When classes ended. I got on my bike and rode back to the orphanage..

It started to rain. Cold. Steady.

But when I saw that familiar gate, a strange calm washed over **me**. I felt... safe.

Thadn't even gotten off my bike when I saw it—the Bennett family car parked right outside.

Dad stepped out. The moment he saw me, soaked **and** shivering, he didn't ask if I was cold. Didn't ask where I'd been.

He slapped me across the face,

The sound of it cracked through the rain, sharp and mean. My cheek burned like fire.

He pointed at me and shouted, "You ungrateful brat! We spent years trying to find you! You finally come home and now you're pulling this nonsense? Running away to threaten **us**?"

His eyes bulged with fury, like I'd just committed some unforgivable crime.

I clutched my cheek, tears pooling in my eyes. I **tried** to explain, "Dad, I wasn't trying to threaten you. I just... I just don't want to be hit and yelled at anymore.

But before I could finish, Mom cut me off.

Her eyes were wet, her voice trembling with **heartbreak** and rage. “It’s pitch black out **what** are you doing out this late? You’re not out there with some man, are you? A girl your age, running wild like this... if you end

up pregnant, you’ll disgrace this entire family!”

The disappointment in her eyes... it crushed me.

Then Elliot came over, his **voice** full of warning. “If you embarrass the Bennett name, I’ll break your legs. I’d rather lock you up **than** let you humiliate us.”

458

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2/2

2152 Wed, Apr 16 G.

The Heiress Revived from the Ashes

Chapter 330 Too Late to Make It Right

In their eyes, in their voices, I was a criminal. Something shameful. And

hollow—like my words **had no** weight.

They dragged me **back** to the Bennett house.

no matter what I said, it felt

The moment we stepped inside, my brother shot me a cold warning: “If you can’t behave, then you don’t deserve to go to school.”

But school... that was the only thing I had. The only hope I had of changing my fate. How could I give that up?

Maybe I just hadn’t tried hard enough. Maybe that’s why they misunderstood me so deeply. If I worked harder—**really** harder—maybe they’d finally see me for who I am.

Even if all this home ever gave me was pain... I still hoped for a sliver of warmth. Just a taste of what it meant to have a family.

Come on. Lauren. You can do this.

Elliot stared at those words, and all he could see was that young, stubborn girl—fighting for air beneath waves of misunderstanding, trying not to drown in judgment.

His hands shook so badly the diary nearly slipped from his

grasp.

“How could I have been so blind? So cruel...” he whispered, voice thick with self-loathing. “I was a monster. I have to find her—I have to make this right, no matter what it takes.”

Tears blurred his vision **again**, soaking into the brittle pages of the diary.

He couldn’t keep reading.

He didn’t need to. He already knew what the rest of it would **say**.

For three years, no one in the Bennett family had shown Lauren a single shred of real care. Every day had been another wound, another **scar**.

His memories came flooding back in unbearable detail. Every time they shouted at her. Every time they punished her. Every time they humiliated her.

Week after week. Year after year.

Dozens of moments, one after another, playing in his head like a punishment reel.

The guilt crushed him.

His temples throbbed. His skull felt like it was splitting **open**. The pain tunneled deep, straight to his **core**.

“Lauren... I’m sorry. Your brother is sorry. I’ll spend the rest of my life making it up to you.”

He placed the diary back into the drawer and staggered out of the room.

He had to find her.

21-34 weg, Apr 10

Chapter 330 Too Late to Make It Right

He had to fall to his knees and beg for her forgiveness

65%

Finished

Elliot, hair disheveled and face streaked with tears, ran straight to the front gate.

He grabbed the arm of the first person he saw. "Have you seen my sister?"

"Who's your sister?"

"Lauren. Her name is Lauren. Please **have** you seen her?"

The man shook his head. "No idea. Sorry."

Elliot moved on, asking everyone he **passed** like a madman.

Each time, the answer was the same—another shake of the head. Another dead end.

He stood in the middle of the street, dazed and lost.

"Ten years, Lauren... why aren't you home? Where did you go? I know I was wrong—I know I was awful.... but I have to find you. I need to say

I'm sorry.

His eyes suddenly lit up.

"Felix! That's right—
ten years ago, she was with Felix. She must be at the Brooker estate!"

Like a man possessed, Elliot took off running toward the Brooker family home.

His feet pounded the pavement faster and faster, each step fueled by desperation.

He didn't know what he'd say. He didn't know if she'd ever forgive him. But he had to try.

He finally reached the Brooker estate.

The towering iron gate glinted under the afternoon sun, cold and forbidding.

Elliot ran up to it and began pounding on it with both fists.

"Open up! I need to see Lauren!"

His voice trembled with urgency, guilt, and a grief that had been bottled up for over a decade.

****Lauren!** It's me—
Elliot! I just got out! I came to see you! Are you in there? Please please come out. I'm
sorry. I came to apologize.”

He kept banging on the gate, **over** and over, hoping someone inside would hear him.

Hoping Lauren would hear him.

Seconds turned to minutes. The gate remained shut.

His heart sank deeper with every **passing** moment. *What* if she wasn't *here*? What if she didn't want to see me? What if she'd never forgive me?

He hit the
gate harder, voice rising with desperation. Lauren, I know I was wrong. I **know** I was horrible.

Please come out I'm home in front of you

”

21-52 Wed. Apr 16 G-

Chapter 330 Too Late to Make It Right

Finally, after what felt like an eternity, the gate creaked open

Standing there was Marilyn

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Finished

Her face was tired and weathered. Her once—
dark hair had gone completely gray, and her back **was** slightly hunched

She looked at him through the bars—expression flat. voice cold.

“She's not here. Go

Marilyn had aged so much since the last time Elliot saw her. Time and grief had carved
deep lines into her face

After losing both Lauren and Shen Man, Marilyn had collapsed into despair. She'd spent six months in the hospital before she could even stand on her own again.

458

