

# **The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late**

## **#Left Behind 121 - Read The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late Left Behind 121**

Chapter 121 Accusations

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For once, the guy who could talk circles around anyone in the business world had nothing to say.

Ronald did not even wait for a reply. He just rolled his eyes like he could not be bothered.

He turned to Tracy with the easy grin of a cheerful college kid.

“Come on, Tracy. Let’s go.”

She gave a small nod, gathered the groceries that had fallen, and quietly walked beside him.

The whole time, she did not spare Andrew a single glance.

It was not until they were back at their small rental place that she finally spoke. “You know who he is. Aren’t you worried he’ll start digging into your past?”

She never asked questions about Ronald’s life, but that did not mean she had not noticed how careful he was about hiding his tracks.

Setting the groceries down, Ronald smiled at her. “Are you worried about me, Tracy?”

She did not answer, but her silence said enough.

His smile widened. “Don’t worry. He can’t touch me.”

Sure, the Jackman name meant something in Cloudville, but outside of it? Not much.

She did not know where his confidence came from, but the way he said it made her feel lighter somehow.

Seeing her relax made something warm stir in Ronald. He stepped closer, leaning down until he was right in front of her.

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“So, you really do care about me, huh?”

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The sudden closeness made her instinctively lean back warily, but she did not actually move away.

Tilting her head slightly, she said flatly, “You trust me that much, so why wouldn’t I care about you?”

Tracy was blunt like that.

She valued trust—the fragile, rare kind—because it was the very thing that had allowed her to leave the Angelic Etiquette Academy.

Her honesty caught him off guard.

He glanced down and noticed her feet had not moved back. His smile returned.

“Then you’d better keep caring about me because I’m always going to trust you like this.”

His eyes glimmered. “Just don’t abandon me.”

His tone was calm, but firm, like he was making a promise and a demand all at once.

She was not sure if she fully understood, but the word abandon made her expression shift.

For her, that word had always meant being the one left behind.

Something unpleasant flickered through her mind, and she pressed her lips together before looking away.

“You should start cooking.”

As usual, she left the kitchen to him and headed to the balcony to check on her newest painting.

When her figure disappeared from his sight, Ronald's smile slowly faded.

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His eyes turned cold as he looked at the scattered groceries on the table.

Then, he pulled out his phone and made a call.

"Andrew's had it too easy lately. Let's give him something to stress over."

Ronald's tone was almost playful, like he was sharing a private joke.

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Tracy did not think much about Andrew's sudden appearance as she had long stopped expecting anything from that family.

Andrew, on the other hand, was fuming.

No one—not even his parents—had ever stood in his face and told him off like that.

There was no way he was letting Ronald walk away unscathed.

And in his mind, this was all Tracy's fault, too.

She had always been bold and unpredictable, but he never thought she would stoop to such ridiculous ways to get her family's attention.

Living with some man whose background was a total mystery?

Shameful.

And then there was Liam.

If Liam had known she was living with another man, why had he not told the family right away?

Andrew finally had a target for all that pent-up anger and went to chew Liam out.

Liam was blindsided.

The last time Andrew had really laid into him like that was back when he was ten. It was when he had snuck Tracy out to watch a street race and almost lost her.

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And now? Tracy was somehow at the center of it again.

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He had kept his mouth shut about her living situation because he was trying to protect her.

She was already on bad terms with the family, and though her stunts were meant to grab their attention, her approach was reckless and only made things worse.

Keeping it a secret had been his way of helping, but apparently, Tracy had gone and complained to Andrew anyway.

Still simmering from Andrew's lecture, Liam was looking for a way to blow off steam when he ran into Tracy coming home.

The sight of her made his temper spike. "Tracy, you'd better explain yourself!"

He stepped right in front of her, eyes sharp, like she had just betrayed him.

Tracy took a step back, her guard instantly up, ready to move if he came closer.

Liam did not notice as he was too caught up in his own anger. "Why'd you rat me out to Andrew? I kept quiet about you living with someone for your sake!"

His voice rose. "And instead of being grateful, you went and told him I didn't tell the family because I don't see you as one of us—that that's why you're on bad terms with them."

That accusation was what had really set him off.

## Chapter 122 Schemes

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If Liam did not see Tracy as family, he would not have gone out of his way to look out for her—much less bitten his tongue when that smug, pretty-faced Ronald called him brainless.

He had been a big deal in Cloudville for years; when had he ever had to put up with that kind of humiliation?

Yet, for Tracy's sake, he would swallow it. And what did he get in return? No thanks, no understanding—just her throwing him under the bus in front of Andrew.

Tracy frowned and took a step back.

She did not know exactly what the brothers had been saying about her, but she knew them well enough: once they decided something, no amount of tears or pleading would change their minds.

She could already picture it—her crying, trying to explain, only for Liam to laugh about it later with his friends over drinks.

That was why she no longer cared what they thought.

“So, Mr. Liam,” she said flatly, “are you stopping me here because you want me to admit I was wrong and apologize? Or do you want me to beg for forgiveness?”

Her words hit him like a punch to the chest.

“What's that supposed to mean?” he snapped. “Why do you always have to talk like that?”

Tracy tilted her head, looking puzzled. “Weren't you the one who said if I didn't apologize, I'd have to grovel and beg?”

Liam froze mid-denial.

His face went pale.

Right, he had said that.

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Whenever he caught Tracy messing up, he would get mad and tell her to admit it and apologize.

However, Tracy was so stubborn—no one knew where she got it from—that even with all the proof laid out in front of her, she still would not admit she was wrong.

When his anger boiled over, he had Tracy kneel and apologize.

Sure, those overly harsh words did come from him, but ...

He had not meant them!

If she had not been so stubborn about refusing to admit fault, he would not have blurted them out in the heat of the moment.

And yeah, there had been a few times when he had gotten so angry that he shoved her.

Yet, to him, that was nothing worth holding a grudge over. She was still hung up on that? Still taking jabs at him for it?

His voice turned almost pleading. “Even if I did say it, it was only because you crossed the line. I was looking out for you.”

Then, as if it explained everything, he added, “It was for your own good.”

Tracy almost laughed out loud.

*For my own good.*

She had heard that line enough to last a lifetime.

“Then tell me, Mr. Liam,” she said coldly, “exactly where have you ever been good to me?”

His patience snapped. “If I didn’t care about you, I would’ve told Andrew ages ago that you’re living with another man!

“You’re obviously smitten with Ronald. If the family forced you to break up, you’d

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throw a fit.

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“And you were already rebelling against them—Ronald just took advantage of that. If he saw you fighting with the family, he’d use it to split you apart for good.”

Liam sounded so sure of himself, like he had personally witnessed the whole thing.

Tracy stayed calm and simply replied, “No.”

Liam froze.

After everything he had just said so passionately, that was all she gave him?

He felt a tightness in his chest, frustration and anger mixing. “You trust him that much?”

They had grown up together, yet she doubted his good intentions and instead put her faith in some pretty boy with a shady background.

Tracy did not bother explaining. “If you’re finished, Mr. Liam, could you step aside? I’d like to go back to my room and rest.”

He thought he had made himself perfectly clear, but she still did not appreciate it!

Normally, he would not waste his breath—anyone who got his care should be thankful.

Why was she treating him like this?

He wanted to snap at her, but when the words reached his throat, they stuck.

Taking a deep breath, he tried again. “Tracy, I’m being serious here. Can you drop that sarcastic tone and just have a proper conversation with me?”

She frowned, both irritated and puzzled. “What is there for us to talk about?”

They had always told her to behave, to keep her head down and not be an eyesore.

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Now that she was following their advice and staying in her place, why weren’t they satisfied?

“How can there be nothing to talk about?” Liam shot back, grabbing her arm in frustration. “We grew up together—we were the closest ones in the whole family!”

His voice softened just a fraction. “I’m mad you brought Ronald around and acted so intimately with him on purpose, but I know you did it to get our attention. I can let that slide, but you have to end things with him right now.”

The moment he mentioned Ronald, his hostility sharpened. “A guy like that, scheming to get close to you, definitely has an agenda. I’m not going to let him get away with *it*.”

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She had the nerve to insult him to his face. There was no way Liam was going to swallow that.

Tracy knew exactly how vindictive he could be.

As Cloudville’s infamous playboy, he made anyone who caught that sharp glint in his eyes end up regretting it.

At first, she planned to just walk away. However, her steps stopped abruptly.

Her gaze went cold, a flicker of anger in her eyes. “I know exactly who the real villain is, Mr. Liam. I don’t need you meddling in my business.”

Her words froze him in place.

He grabbed her arm, squeezing without realizing it. “Are you calling me the villain, or is this for some outsider?”

Her arm throbbed from his grip, but she did not flinch or pull away. Instead, she just stared back with equal intensity.

“To the Jackmans, I’ve always been an outsider. So, my affairs aren’t any of your concern, Mr. Liam.”

His face paled, his eyes widening. “Why do you always cling to the idea that you’re not part of the family? Did Ronald put that in your head?”



It was like he thought he had uncovered some grand conspiracy. “I knew that guy was no good. He’s just trying to drive us apart to win your trust. You’re not seriously falling for that, are you?”

He looked at her with condescension, as if she were some naïve child while he was the one suffering for her sake.

Tracy’s patience thinned. “Even if I am being fooled, that’s my problem. It has nothing to do with you.”

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His temper spiked. “How did I never see you were this stubborn? I’m telling you, Ronald is bad news, he’s scheming ...

“It’s none of your business,” she cut him off, “I know him better than you do.”

He was stunned.

After a long silence, he finally asked, “Do you trust him that much?”

She did not answer, but her silence said everything.

A dull pain pierced his chest, sharp as a needle prick.

“Why? He’s a nobody. He lives off your money, and, besides his looks, he’s useless. What’s there to trust?”

He could not understand.

She used to trust him without question. When had Ronald taken that place?

Tracy was not about to soothe his wounded pride, but she also knew his nature.

If she pushed too hard, he would go straight after Ronald.

So instead, she met his eyes head-on. “You want to know why he’s worth it? Fine.”

Her voice was steady, deliberate. “Because he’s sincere. He’s pure.”

“In the old district, every elder likes him because he treated everyone with a genuine heart.”

That was the only sincerity she had ever felt from someone,

Her reason was simple—so simple it barely sounded like a reason at all.

Liam could not wrap his head around it. He was convinced that she was just using it as an excuse to dodge the truth.

“Just that? Tracy, you’re not a kid anymore. Do you actually believe something that

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naïve?”

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He let out a sharp laugh. “Sincerity? Please. The Jackmans taught you from the start to be cautious, yet you guard yourself against your own family while blindly trusting some stranger you barely know.

“Even if he’s sincere now, how do you know he won’t change one day?

“Honestly, you’re ridiculously naïve.”

Tracy did not even look offended. She just nodded. “You’re right. I am ridiculously naïve. I am foolish enough to believe sincerity lasts forever.”

Her agreement did not sit right with him.

After a pause, he nodded. “Well, it’s good you realize that. Only family will forever be sincere with you, you ...”

“Heh.” Her laugh cut him off like a blade.

Family?

Forever *sincere*?

What gave *him*

*the right to say that so confidently?*

Her gaze turned cold, almost mocking. “Where in this world is there such a thing as forever sincerity? Mr. Liam, did you forget? You once swore you’d always treat me well, never let anyone bully me.

“But later—for Erin—you called me malicious, cursed me to die a horrible death, forced me to apologize, and almost hit my head with an ashtray,

“Is that what you call sincerity?”

Liam froze.

He had never intended to treat her that way.

## Chapter 123 Sincerity

When he had sworn to protect her, he had meant every word.

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However, the cursing, the wish for her dead, and that ashtray had all happened, too.

He opened his mouth, but nothing came out.

In the end, all he could say was, “Even if I cursed you, that was your own fault.

“If you were as sensible and kind as Erin, of course, I’d treat you well forever. But look at yourself. How do you compare to her?”

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## Chapter 124 The Matter

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Tracy’s lips curled in a cold smile.

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The Jackmans loved using her as a backdrop for Erin—she was always the one who could not measure up.

“If you think Erin is so amazing, then go give her your so-called sincerity. Treat her well, and stop telling me you still have feelings for me.”

The very idea made her sick.

Liam stared at her, that mocking smile still on his face, but a flicker of hesitation passed through his mind.

Was she hinting that his feelings for Erin could change, too?

Ridiculous.

Erin was pure and kind, unlike Tracy, who was ungrateful and difficult. He would never change how he treated Erin.

Just as he was thinking that, a familiar voice came from behind. “Liam, Tracy, what are you talking about?”

Liam turned, and his expression softened instantly. “Erin, you’re back. What did you buy?”

Erin smiled warmly. “Two brands just released new handbags, so Winona and I went to check them out.”

As if suddenly remembering something, she pulled a small pendant from her pocket. “I saw this and thought it would look great hanging in your new car. That way, every time you see it, you’ll think of me.”

Liam accepted it with obvious joy.

It was not expensive and not even close to his usual taste, but he really liked it.

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Erin always thought of him, even when she was out shopping. She was the best person in the world—far better than Tracy. She had even saved his life once.

With that thought, Liam turned to lecture Tracy...

Only to find that she was gone.

Seeing that he stayed quiet after receiving the gift and kept glancing back at Tracy, Erin frowned for a moment before quickly smoothing her expression.

“Liam, you don’t like it?” she asked carefully.

Liam came to his senses and found Erin looking at him, her eyes filled with anxious expectation and a trace of hidden hurt.

Liam quickly snapped back. “Of course, I like it! I love everything you give me. I’ll hang it in my car right now.”

He wanted Erin to know that he would treat her with true sincerity, and that would never change.

With a firm vow in his heart, he took her hand and said, “Erin, I’ll always treat you well and protect you for life.

“You and Tracy are different. The way I treat her is all on her. I would never treat you that way.”

Erin blinked in surprise at his sudden declaration, confusion flickering in her gaze.

Lately, he had been acting strangely.

He said he would never treat her like Tracy, yet he had been doubting and questioning her not long ago.

Inside, Erin sneered.

She had used certain methods to win over the Jackmans, but if their characters had been truly solid, she never could have succeeded.

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If even Tracy—who had been by his side for 18 years—could betray and abandon him, how could she believe Liam’s “forever”?

Still, her face showed none of it. She simply smiled.

She squeezed Liam’s hand in return. “Of course, I believe you. You’ve always been the one I trust the most.”

That familiar trust and dependence in her eyes soothed the unease Liam had felt after Tracy’s words.

Yet Erin’s own heart was far from calm.

His strange comments unsettled her, and she could not shake the feeling that ever since Tracy had come back from the Angelic Etiquette Academy, things had started slipping out of her control—especially Liam, the one she thought she had wrapped around her finger.

She did not know exactly what had changed, but she could guess it had everything to do with Tracy.

Erin had fought hard for everything she had now, and she was not about to let Tracy take any of it back.

The moment she got to her room, she pulled out her phone and made a call.

“Erin, it’s so late. You haven’t gone to bed yet? What’s the urgency?”

A woman’s voice floated through the line, dripping with flattery and concern, and carrying a touch of familiarity.

“Mrs. Woodward, I just wanted to ask how you were thinking over that matter we discussed last time,” Erin said in her usual gentle and dignified tone with a faint

smile in her voice.

However, her expression was cold, sharp, and utterly ruthless.

The contrast was almost chilling.

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On the other end, Felicia Woodward sat cross-legged in her study, lazily swirling the coffee in her cup.

“People get forgetful as they age,” she replied lightly. “Which matter exactly are you referring to?”

Her tone was casual, but the curve of her lips held unmistakable sarcasm.

That “matter” had been nothing more than an offhand promise to placate the Jackmans’ daughter—she had no intention of letting some young girl treat her like

a pawn.

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Chapter 125 Stepping Straight Into Her Snare

Erin was practically grinding her teeth on the other end of the call.

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The Woodwards had depended on the Jackmans for years, which was why they had agreed to let Chris cozy up to Tracy before.

That same connection was why Erin had gone to Felicia for help, and she had agreed readily at the time.

But after that? Nothing. Every time Erin asked, the woman brushed her off with a vague, “Still thinking it over.”

And now, even when Erin called her directly, the old fox was still playing dumb.

Forcing down her irritation, Erin said, “If you really can’t remember, then let’s just drop it, Mrs. Woodward.”

Her tone seemed mild, but then she let her words take a sharper turn. “I was actually thinking of recommending the Woodwards to Andrew for a new company project. What a pity.”

In Cloudville, the Jackman Enterprise’s new project was a prize that everyone wanted.

The Woodwards’ status meant they were not desperate for such deals, but for Felicia—currently locked in a power struggle with her husband, Albert Woodward -it was an opportunity she could not ignore.

The casual posture vanished. Felicia sat up straighter, her voice suddenly cautious.

“Erin, you’re not joking, are you? Everyone knows Andrew keeps business and personal matters strictly separate. Even his mother couldn’t get her own relatives a cushy position in the company, so you ...”

Erin knew exactly why Felicia was suspicious.

Andrew’s reputation for fairness was ironclad. He had never given Daphne’s relatives any special treatment, so no one dared to ask him for favors.

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## Chapter 125 Stepping Straight Into Her Snare

However, Erin was different.

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If she asked, Andrew would not refuse, and she would make sure he never had the chance to.

“Andrew always listens to me,” Erin said confidently. “It’s just a change of partners, nothing that would hurt the Jackmans. Don’t you trust me, Mrs. Woodward?”

That was enough to make Felicia set her coffee aside and smile. “Of course, I trust you. But you know, business can be unpredictable. I’m sure you understand what I mean.”

The Jackmans’ real daughter was not naïve, and Felicia was certain she would catch the hint.

“Oh! I just remembered,” Felicia said suddenly, as if inspiration had struck. “You mean the time you asked me to help find the people who kidnapped Tracy and have them turn themselves in, right? I may be getting older, but I’ve still got some connections in the underworld. A small favor like that isn’t impossible, but...”

She let the sentence dangle before adding, “Well, let’s just say I work best when I’m in a good mood. Don’t you agree, Erin?”

Erin caught the hint immediately. “Don’t worry, Mrs. Woodward. I’ll make sure you’re in a very good mood.”

The two exchanged polite words for a few more minutes before ending the call.

Felicia was still smiling as she set her phone down.



The Jackmans' supposedly innocent, beloved real daughter had secretly arranged for the fake one to be kidnapped, and now that suspicion might fall on her—she wanted Felicia to clean up the mess.

They had never been close before.

Erin must have reached out because she had noticed the rumors swirling around Chris and Tracy.

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If the “kidnapper” Felicia found claimed that Tracy had staged her own abduction, and no one questioned it, then all would be well.

And if things went wrong and the Jackmans traced it back to the Woodwards, well, it could always be spun as a mother's misguided act for her son.

Either way, Erin would not take the fall.

With that kind of calculation, she was clearly not the simple, sweet girl she appeared to be.

However, the Jackmans' real daughter had a spotless reputation in Cloudville- everyone saw her as gentle and kind, which was exactly why the family adored her.

The Jackmans really were interesting.

Felicia had a hunch that there would be plenty more entertainment coming from that household, and if she played her cards right, she might even profit from it.

Still smiling, she set her phone aside and reached for her coffee before stopping halfway. Something felt off.

Her gaze flicked to the slightly open door.

The hallway beyond looked empty, but her instincts told her someone had been there.

What she had told Erin earlier had not been a lie—she did have underworld connections, all leftovers from her younger years. Along with them came certain survival habits, including keeping her senses sharp,

And, of course, her home was peppered with hidden surveillance devices.

A quick check confirmed her suspicion—someone had been standing at the doorway, listening in.

Her only son in name was Chris.

One of the cameras had caught his face perfectly, and from his expression alone,

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Chapter 125 Stepping Straight Into Her Snare

Felicia could tell what was running through his mind.

This was why she favored him over his twin, Derek.

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Chris was sly, hungry for power, and easy to manipulate—unlike his annoyingly sharp-witted brother.

She had been considering how to shield herself if she struck a deal with Erin—but now, someone had practically delivered himself into her hands.

It seemed fate had decided to be generous today.

Chris, meanwhile, crept away from the study door on tiptoe, completely unaware that he had just stepped straight into her snare.

Chapter 126 Patricia

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Chris was still quietly congratulating himself—he had stumbled upon the perfect way to get leverage over Felicia.

Earlier, when he had deliberately approached Tracy, he had noticed something: the Jackmans did not really care much about their so-called fake heiress. However, the moment anything concerning her touched on the Jackmans' own interests, their attitude shifted.

So, whatever Felicia and Erin had going on, if that old woman made a move against Tracy, Chris could use it to put her squarely in the Jackmans' line of sight.

Everyone had their own game, and right now, every scheme seemed to be pointing at the same target—Tracy.

She, of course, knew nothing about it.

At that moment, she was holding a folder and making her way back to Sunderpeak High School.

Sunderpeak High School was the most prestigious private school in Cloudville, and even from the front gates, its "wall of honor" gleamed in neat, polished rows.

Her photo used to hang there.

However, after her plagiarism scandal in college, the school had quietly taken it down, replacing it with a fresh, unfamiliar face.

Now, standing in front of the wall, Tracy felt a dull ache in her chest. She stared at it for a long while, lost in thought, until a voice came from behind her.

"Tracy Yarwood?"

She turned and saw Trina Kirkland approaching, a stack of papers in her arms and a puzzled look on her face.

Trina's gaze shifted from Tracy to the Wall of Honor, and comprehension dawned.

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Once upon a time, Tracy had been Sunderpeak High's most dazzling star—the kind of alum every teacher proudly pointed out to new students.

So, when her picture was removed, it caused quite a stir among the staff, and Trina had heard all about it.

Still, Trina did not mention the wall. Instead, she asked lightly, "Here for something at the school?"

Tracy knew it was just polite small talk as they were far from close.

Trina had never liked her much, especially after the Professor Dinwiddie incident, though her attitude had mellowed somewhat since.

“I’m here to see Mr. Schmidt,” Tracy replied.

She had intended to leave it at that, but then something occurred to her. “Actually, I wanted to ask you about someone. Patricia ... ”

Tracy gave a brief description, not expecting much.

Even if Trina taught at Sunderpeak, it was not realistic to assume she knew every student—especially someone as unremarkable as Patricia.

Tracy had only brought it up because her own investigation into Patricia had turned up a few oddities, and she figured it could not hurt to try.

To her surprise, Trina’s expression shifted the moment she heard the name—there was a flicker of shock, and even a hint of wariness.

“You know her?” Tracy asked, puzzled.

Trina hesitated. Her lips parted, but it took her a moment to settle on her words.

“If the Patricia you’re talking about is who I think she is, then talking to Mr. Schmidt might not help,” she said carefully.

Tracy caught the subtle tension in her voice and lowered her own. “Why?”

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Trina’s brows knit slightly, as if unsure how to even begin explaining.

Tracy did not push as she could tell Trina was holding back for a reason.

However, Trina could not help asking in return, “Why are you looking for Patricia?”

Tracy’s expression faltered, a faint tremor passing through her eyes before she fell silent for a moment. “She’s my friend’s sister,” she finally said. “He wanted me to pass a message to her.”

Trina frowned slightly. “If she’s your friend’s sister, why would you need to find her?”

In this day and age, with the internet making it easy to reach anyone, why send a middleman?

Tracy's lips pressed together, her voice dropping lower. "Because he's dead."

He had been beaten to death right in front of her while trying to steal medicine to save her life.

The Angelic Etiquette Academy never willingly let a student die—not when each one was "valuable," backed by powerful families.

Except for the ten they branded as stray dogs.

Those ten were abandoned completely—dogs no one cared to see live.

For a moment, a heavy, oppressive darkness rolled off Tracy, as if it could swallow the air around her. Then, in the blink of an eye, it was gone.

Hiding her emotions was a survival skill she had perfected at the Academy. Even standing right beside her, Trina did not notice.

She had not expected such an answer and was momentarily at a loss. Should she say something to comfort her?

Carrying out a dead friend's last wish was admirable, but if the Patricia she was looking for was the same one Trina remembered...

## Chapter 126 Patricia

Trina's gentle nature—something she had inherited from her mother—pushed her to speak up before Tracy could leave.

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"Um if the Patricia you're talking about is the one I think the trip for nothing."

Tracy paused, confused.

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you might be making

Since she had already started, Trina decided not to stop halfway. She glanced around, then leaned closer, her voice dropping to an almost a whisper.

“The day before the SAT, four years ago, a student named Patricia jumped off a building.”

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Tracy’s heart gave a sharp jolt. She grabbed Trina’s hand, her face drained of color, lips parting and closing as if she wanted to speak but could not.

Trina seemed to understand what she was trying to ask and spoke first. “From what I know, the Patricia you mentioned matches the one I heard about.”

That was why she had hesitated earlier.

Tracy’s face grew even paler.

*How could this be?*

David had told her that his sister, Patricia, transferred schools during her senior year. He had rushed back in worry after hearing the news—only to be kidnapped and wake up at the Angelic Etiquette Academy.

Switching schools at such a critical time meant something serious must have happened. David never knew what had happened, and it had remained a thorn in his heart.

When her own investigation into Patricia hit roadblocks, Tracy had suspected the truth was tied to that transfer. Yet she had not expected this.

If this Patricia really was David’s sister ...

Seeing her unsettled expression, Trina hesitated, then tried to offer comfort. “I’ve only been teaching here for the past two years. I only heard about Patricia’s case in passing, so it’s possible she’s not the one you’re looking for.”

Tracy’s fingers trembled slightly. “What else do you know about her?”

Trina shook her head. “The school forbids discussing it. I only overheard some teachers talking in private. I don’t know much.”

Tracy’s lips pressed into a thin line. Her usually calm eyes were now turbulent.

The more people tried to hide something, the more serious it likely was. She had

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## Chapter 127 Suspicions

to find the truth.

If this Patricia was David's sister...

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Tracy let go of Trina's hand and made her way alone to the principal's office.

Luck was on her side—Kellen Schmidt was in, and the office was empty.

He looked friendly at first, a scholarly man in glasses who smiled and invited her to sit.

However, when she introduced herself, his face hardened into open disdain.

"You? What are you doing here?" he scoffed.

Her name, once a point of pride for Sunderpeak High, now brought only contempt.

Tracy did not flinch. She knew what to expect and went straight to the point.

"I'm here to ask about a student. Tell me what I need to know, and I'll leave."

Her gaze locked on his, unblinking. "Patricia."

Kellen's expression stiffened. He avoided her eyes. "Patricia? There are many students here. How could I remember them all?"

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He stood, gesturing to the door. "If there's nothing else, you should go. Our school doesn't welcome people with your character."

Tracy neither rose to the insult nor argued. Instead, she calmly placed the document she had been holding on his desk.

"If you send me away without answering, this will be in the inbox of every major media outlet in Cloudville within an hour."

Derek had taught her that if you wanted something, you needed leverage; if you wanted compliance, you needed dirt.

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She had suspected Patricia's case was far from simple, so she had come prepared.

Always be ready for the worst—that was another lesson Derek had drilled into her.

Kellen clearly had not planned on humoring her, but her steady, confident demeanor made him reluctantly take the document.

The moment he read it, his expression flickered, and he snapped it shut.

"How did you get this?"

If the media ever got their hands on it, his career—and probably the rest of his life - would be over.

Tracy's tone remained cool. "I'm not interested in your personal scandals. I just want information about Patricia."

Her meaning was clear—she was not here to ruin him, as long as he cooperated.

His eyes turned cold, but he had no choice. Grinding his teeth, he said, "The Patricia you're asking about transferred out four years ago. I don't know where she went, so trying to pressure me won't help."

He looked almost pitiful, as if to say, *Even*

*if you force me, I can't give you more.*

Tracy's lips tightened. She studied him carefully, weighing whether he was telling the truth.

Trina had mentioned a suicide, but Kellen claimed a transfer. Were they even talking about the same Patricia?

After a long silence, she finally asked, "Why did she transfer?"

She kept her deeper suspicions to herself.



If he had seen what was in the document and still would not come clean, it meant the reason he was hiding was bigger than any dirt she had on him.

Kellen seemed to think she believed his story, letting out a subtle sigh of relief.

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"How would I know why a student wants to transfer? Every year, we see students come and go. Even as principal, I can't possibly remember the details of every single one."

His words sounded reasonable, and his tone gave nothing away.

Yet Tracy did not buy a single word.

The name Patricia was not rare, so Sunderpeak High had probably had several over the years.

Yet the moment she mentioned it, without asking for a last name or any description, he knew exactly which Patricia she meant.

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Tracy knew something off, but no matter how hard she pressed, Kellen kept insisting he knew nothing.

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Then he tried to turn the tables on her. "What do you even want with Patricia?" he asked, his tone laced with suspicion.

Given her past, there was no reason she should have any connection to Patricia. So why dig it up now after all these years?

Tracy lowered her gaze, her voice calm and unreadable. "A friend of mine asked me to pass along a message."

"A friend? And how does your friend know Patricia?" Kellen pressed.

“My friend is her brother,” she replied.

For a split second, his face changed—panic flashing in his eyes before he quickly masked it.

It was brief, but Tracy had been watching closely.

Could Patricia’s disappearance really be tied to David?

If so, then the Patricia the principal mentioned might actually be the one she was looking for.

A sliver of hope broke through the unease that had been weighing her down.

Maybe Kellen was hiding details, but he had said she transferred, and David had said the same.

Maybe just maybe—Patricia really had just switched schools.

Clinging to that thought, she lingered a little longer, casually steering the conversation toward David.

As expected, every time his name came up, Kellen’s expression shifted—just

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slightly—though he never slipped up enough to reveal anything concrete.

Not wanting to alert him, Tracy pretended to accept his story.

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Once she left the school, however, she immediately set people to work—digging through every record of students who had either transferred or committed suicide during their senior year at Sunderpeak High over the past few years.

Of course, she hoped the Patricia she was looking for was the same one Kellen had mentioned. However, as Derek always said—*Hope for the best, prepare for the worst.*

She had to find Patricia.

The words David never got the chance to say to his sister had been his greatest regret—even in death—and she would make sure that regret did not stay with him forever.

At the same time, she ordered an investigation into the Renaults of Sinhaven.

Kellen's reaction all but confirmed Patricia's situation had something to do with David, and if that was true, the Renaults—David's family—were almost certainly involved.

And if it was the Renaults...

Tracy felt a dull headache beginning to form.

In Sinhaven, the Renaults held the same untouchable position as the Jackmans did in Cloudville—top of the top.

If Patricia's case really involved them, then with her current resources, she might already be in over her head.

She mulled over all of this as she made her way toward the Jackman Villa.

The past few days had been a relentless grind—looking into Walter's accident, chasing Patricia's trail, and now digging into the Renaults of Sinhaven.

Tracy had not set foot in the Jackman Villa for days, choosing instead to crash at a

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rented apartment whenever she needed a break.

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If it were not for having to pick up some of Walter's belongings, she would not have shown up today at all.

The moment she stepped inside, she ran straight into Erin and Andrew.

They had not noticed her by the door, too busy chatting and laughing together.

Erin hung off Andrew's arm, her voice syrupy and coaxing. "Andrew, just say yes.

"This project's going to need partners eventually, and the Woodwards are experts in this field. Giving it to them wouldn't be a loss."

Andrew did not snap at her for poking her nose into company business, but he did frown.

“Why are you suddenly speaking up for the Woodward’s?”

Erin was normally smart enough to stay out of such matters, knowing he did not like interference.

And it was not like she was close to the Woodward’s—their only son, Chris, was not exactly her buddy.,

However, Erin did not so much as blink. “I know you don’t like people meddling, but I’m doing this for Tracy,” she said, lips pursed just enough to look sincere.

“I don’t know why she and Chris didn’t end up together, but everyone knows she got plenty of benefits from him. Even if the Woodward’s haven’t said anything, outsiders think the Jackmans owe them, and it makes us look bad.

“I just want to repay that debt for her.”

She sounded earnest enough, but her reasoning was completely illogical.

Still, the usually sharp Andrew acted as if he did not notice any holes in her argument and even nodded in agreement.

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From the doorway, Tracy was not the least bit surprised by the scene.

It was always like this anyway.

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Anything that came out of Erin’s mouth—right or wrong, sensible or not—the Jackmans took at face value without question.

This time was no exception. After a moment’s thought, Andrew agreed to her suggestion. “The Woodward’s are indeed a solid choice. Giving them the company’s new project could mean more profit for us

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And, true to his businessman’s instincts, he was already working out how to cooperate with the Woodward’s once the project was handed over.

The moment he said yes, Erin beamed, looped her arm through his, and leaned into his shoulder. “I knew you were the best, Andrew!”

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He smiled warmly and gave her nose a gentle pinch.

That simple, familiar gesture hit Tracy like a punch to the chest.

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It had been ages since she’d leaned on his shoulder and acted all sweet like that. Back then, she never dared bring up company business in front of him.

Even the time she spoke up for Simon’s dad to become vice president, it was not just because she asked. The guy was talented, offered huge benefits, and the board had already agreed. Her words were just a little push at the end.

Even so, he had been furious with her.

Not like now.

She let out a small laugh.

So this was what *real favoritism looked like—*

*throwing away your own rules for someone.*

No matter how many times she told herself not to expect anything from them, her chest still tightened painfully.

She pressed a hand to it, letting the ache remain.

The more it hurt, the more she would get used to it.

That was how she had survived two years at the Angelic Etiquette Academy.

Her quiet laugh drew the attention of the “perfect sibling” scene in front of her.

His smile vanished, and he frowned at her. “What’re you laughing at?”

She lowered her hand and spoke coldly. “Just didn’t think Mr. Andrew—so big on rules—would let someone else butt into company matters.”

She was ripping open her own old wounds on purpose, letting the pain sink in until it dulled.

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“Back then, I had just spoken kindly about Simon’s dad, not even asked for help, and you snapped at me. You called me naive, saying girls should stick to shopping and handbags, not business.

“But now ...”

Her gaze slid toward Erin.

Andrew looked away, like he had something to hide.

He had been raised to put the company above everything, and even when he liked her back then, he would not let her interfere.

But for Erin, it seemed like nothing else mattered.

If she asked for the stars, he would probably try to bring them down for her.

Erin froze for a split second when she saw him staring at her.

Andrew was not like Liam. He was not clueless. If he started asking questions ...

She jumped in quickly. “I know what you said, Tracy. After Andrew scolded you, you were upset for ages, and not even Mom could calm you down. Liam even argued with him over it.”

Her words pulled his mind away from whatever he had been thinking. “How do you know about that?” he asked, frowning.

He clearly remembered that Erin had not even been living with them at the time.

Erin smiled softly. "Miranda told me. She said she had to talk to you for a long time before you finally calmed down."

At the mention of that name, Tracy's hand curled into a fist.

She turned toward Andrew, and sure enough, his expression had gone cold.

Miranda Snowden was still a raw wound for him, the one thing between them that had never healed,

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Even though Tracy had explained a hundred times, even though there was no proof she had done it, he still saw her as the one who had caused that tragedy.

His eyes were icy, with a trace of resentment. "The family spent all that money sending you to the Angelic Etiquette Academy, and you still haven't learned anything. You are always trying to compete with Erin.

"She's suggesting the Woodwards for the good of the company. You just live off us without any gratitude, so what gives you the right to stand here and act jealous?"

Tracy pressed her lips together, saying nothing.

Oh yes, the Academy.

How could she forget? What a gift.

She lowered her head slightly. "You're right, I have no right. I won't bother you anymore."

Without another glance, she turned toward her room.

However, Erin was not done yet. "Andrew, don't be so hard on her. I'm sure she didn't mean it that way. She's been busy taking care of Grandpa lately and hasn't been home much. She's probably just tired and upset seeing how nice you are to

me."

That seemed to remind him. He turned back to frown at Tracy. "Where have you been these past few days?"

He knew full well she had not been visiting Franklin in the hospital.

Tracy did not want to share anything about her own life, but something made her look at Erin instead.

Erin's chest tightened at the sight, an uneasy feeling creeping in.

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Tracy spoke up calmly. "Grandpa asked me to look into Walter's car accident."

Erin's eyes flickered, and she instinctively met Tracy's gaze—eyes that felt like they could see right through her.

Her hands curled into fists, and her breath hitched.

*What was Tracy implying?*

*Did she know something?*

Andrew, oblivious to Erin's tension, frowned. "Wasn't it already confirmed as an accident? What's there to investigate?"

Tracy stayed quiet for a moment before glancing away from Erin. "Walter called me before it happened. He said he'd found something, then I couldn't reach him

anymore.

"He wasn't alone when he left. Something that big happens, and the people with him took their sweet time reporting it. Then, the police show up on Grandpa's birthday. You really think all that's just a coincidence?"



For someone as detail-oriented as Andrew, the fact that he had not questioned any of this was odd.

Her eyes went back to Erin.

Too many strange things seemed to lead right back to her.

It was only then that Andrew seemed to catch on. A trace of guilt crossed his face, and his voice softened. "So, did you find anything?"

Tracy didn't flinch. "I found a lead, but I need to confirm it. I'll tell you when it's the right time."

And with that, she brushed off his offer to help and headed to her room.

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As she passed the couch, she turned her head suddenly, pinning Erin with a cold, penetrating look that made Erin freeze in place.

*Tracy definitely knew something.*

But *how*

*could she? No one in this world could possibly know I had sabotaged that car.*

For the first time since coming here, Erin felt a wave of panic she could not control. She did not even hear Andrew calling her.

"Erin!"

She snapped out of it to find him frowning. "What's going on with you? You've gone pale."

"It's nothing..." She forced herself to sound calm. "I was just thinking that maybe Tracy's upset about how you spoke to her."

“Should I go talk to her? Families shouldn’t hold grudges. If she can get along with everyone, I don’t mind taking a step back.”

Andrew sighed and tapped her forehead. “You’re just too kind.

“With me dealing with all this, you don’t need to worry. Just think about what you want for your birthday next month.”

Erin slipped her arm through his again, her voice soft and sweet. “As long as it’s from you, I’ll love it.”

Just like that, the two were back in their cozy little bubble, acting like Tracy had never even been there.

The moment Tracy got to her room, she pulled out her phone. “Keep an eye on Erin. I want to know everything—where she goes, who she meets, and what she’s up to.”

There was no way someone could be guilty and not slip up somewhere,

Maybe it was because she had been away more and kept her distance from the

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family, but lately—with Franklin’s support—she had been able to keep things civil with them.

Meanwhile, Jackman Enterprise’s new project had been officially announced, along with their partnership with the Woodwards.

The Woodwards’ reputation in Cloudville instantly shot up, and thanks to Felicia’s skill, the news spread everywhere.

Even Ronald, who usually stuck to the old district, heard about it and brought it up over dinner.

Tracy had never cared about Jackman Enterprise’s affairs, past or present, so she did not know a thing about it and had not planned to.

“It’s fine if you didn’t know before,” Ronald said with a gentle smile. “But you should keep an eye on it now—especially Andrew’s new project. You might get a surprise.”

She froze mid-bite and looked up at him. “What did you do?”

She knew Ronald was resourceful, but without even an ID card, going against Andrew here was like throwing an egg at a boulder.

Ronald’s eyes twinkled. “If I tell you now, it won’t be a surprise.”

He had been setting this up for a long time. Andrew had treated Tracy unfairly, and Ronald had never let that go.

Tracy knew exactly why he was doing this—it was for her.

She wanted to respond but found herself at a loss for words.

Since the day they met, he had been nothing but genuine with her, though she had no idea what she had done to deserve such loyalty from a stranger.

After a long pause, she finally asked, “Is what you’re doing dangerous?”

Ronald’s dimples deepened at that. Her first reaction was not about the Jackmans

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losing out, but about his safety.