

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

## **#Left Behind 161 - Read The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late Left Behind 161**

Chapter 161 The Truth About Patricia

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"Tell Winona this—if she has a problem, she can come at me. But if I ever find out she bothers Grandpa again with her little schemes, don't blame me for breaking the deal I made with her!"

Tracy didn't have any solid evidence that could take Winona down, but the warning was sharp enough to put fear in her heart.

The man standing in front of her seemed to understand. He nodded frantically, grabbed his phone, and bolted out the door.

Ronald hadn't said much, only tossing in a well-timed threat.

But when he watched the man rush off in a panic, a different emotion flickered in his eyes.

It's *his first time here*?

Ronald thought back. *No—that isn't true*

. I *had seen this guy at the hospital before*.

Suspicion grew in him, and he silently made a mental note to dig deeper into it later.

Then another thought struck him. He turned to Tracy. "CeeCee, are you having Trina help you investigate Winona?"

Tracy, who had been focused on keeping Franklin from being dragged into this, froze at the sudden question.

She had asked Trina for help, yes, but it wasn't about Winona—it was about Patricia.

In fact, that had been Trina's idea.

This **was** supposed to be Tracy's burden. But after Trina overheard a few details, she offered to help.

Even though Trina had always held a grudge against her because of Professor Dinwiddie, she had never actually done anything to hurt her. She hadn't even stepped in to stop the professor's actions.

Deep down, Trina was a good person—just like the professor, in her own way.

Puzzled, Tracy looked at Ronald. "What does Trina have to do with Winona?"

The moment she asked, Ronald realized she didn't know the full story yet.

"I've been digging into Winona for a while," he admitted. "Turns out Trina has secretly been investigating Winona's high school years."

It wasn't difficult to trace Trina back to Tracy. With Ronald's sharp instincts, he quickly put the pieces together—that's why he had held off on making a move against Winona.

Tracy's heart thudded.

*High school years?*

Her mind flashed to that classmate—the one who had leapt from the rooftop right in front of her.

**08:18 Wed, 10 Sept 0**

Chapter 161 The Truth About Patricia

Tracy's thoughts spun. Could it really be that much of a coincidence?

A wave of panic rose in her chest, mixed with a dark, burning anger.

If that classmate was really Patricia—the very one she'd been searching for all this time—

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The thought alone made her restless. She couldn't sit still. She reached out to Trina right away, needing

answers.

When they met, Tracy didn't waste any time. "Are you investigating Winona?" she asked bluntly.

The question caught Trina off guard. "How do you know?"

She had been careful in her digging, knowing the Millers weren't people to cross. For safety's sake, she hadn't even told Tracy. Yet somehow, Tracy already knew.

With the question out in the open, Trina chose not to hide it anymore. "That girl who jumped ... Patricia," she began. "She was one of the top students ever admitted to Sunderpeak High, with nearly perfect scores. But later, she somehow offended Winona. Thereafter, the entire class turned on her. She was bullied constantly, but even then, she kept her grades up."

Trina's eyes darkened as she continued, "She only needed to make it through the SATS. But the *day* before, she jumped from the roof.

"The story caused a stir back then, but Patricia only had her grandmother—an old woman who swept streets and collected cans to survive. The school smothered the story quickly.

"That part didn't surprise me. Schools protect their reputation. What struck me as odd was that Patricia's record listed her as a transfer student, not someone who had died."

That detail matched exactly what the principal had told Tracy.

She was now certain that the Patricia whom Trina had mentioned was the same girl the principal spoke of. Still, there was the chance she wasn't the girl Tracy was looking for.

Tracy had never met David's sister, not even in a photo. Even though she had prepared herself for the worst, she couldn't ignore any possibility.

Only by doing that could she honor the promise she'd made to David.

Steadying her emotions, she asked calmly, "Was Patricia's death connected to Winona?"

If not, there would be no reason for Trina to investigate her.

Trina nodded.

"The school covered it up, but rumors still spread."

Her face grew serious, and if Tracy looked closely, she could see the anger burning in her eyes. "I **heard** people say the real reason Patricia jumped was because of bullying."

And that bully, of course, was Winona.

**Still**, Trina admitted it was only hearsay. She hadn't confirmed it yet, which was why she'd **been quietly**

Chapter 161 The Truth About Patricia

investigating, though she hadn't uncovered much.

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Tracy's expression tensed. Suddenly she remembered the last words Patricia had said to her before leaping

from the roof.

"Winona has driven me into a corner. She'd destroyed my life."

Chapter 162 Unjust

*Winona ...*

Tracy's heart clenched as if an invisible hand had grabbed it tight, making it hard to breathe.

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"If Winona really drove Patricia to her death, is no one going to speak up?" Her voice was hoarse. "Bullying in school doesn't stay hidden. There's no way the whole campus didn't know."

Back then, she and Patricia had been classmates with Winona. But Tracy had grown up spoiled, carrying herself with pride, and never really mixed with her peers. Because of that, she had never heard about Winona bullying anyone.

Still, when she woke up from her shock that day, the very first thing she did was tell Andrew about Patricia's last words—and ask him to pass them on.

Her chest tightened again.

How could she have forgotten? Andrew was the kind of man who valued the family reputation and interests above everything else. There was no way he'd get involved in a scandal like that.

At the time, she had trusted and relied on Andrew too much, never once thinking about it.

Trina didn't know the details. She only saw Tracy's pale face and, after a moment's thought, said carefully, "The school banned everyone from talking about it. I didn't dare

dig too deep, worried I might alert Winona, but I heard that aside from Patricia's grandmother making a scene once, no one mentioned it again. Later, even her grandmother disappeared from the picture."

Tracy wasn't surprised.

She had long known what kind of man Andrew was. Still, the realization filled her with bitter disappointment.

Noticing Tracy's tight expression and silence, Trina asked worriedly, "What's wrong?"

Tracy shook her head. She didn't explain.

Gathering her emotions, she looked at Trina and said, "I'll handle the rest. You don't need to get involved anymore."

The Millers weren't as powerful as the Jackmans, but Tony had struck it rich years ago. He bought a batch of undervalued stones and uncovered several rare gemstones, pushing his family straight into Cloudville's high society. They weren't a family someone like Trina could offend.

Tracy didn't spell it out, but Trina wasn't stupid. She could guess what Tracy meant.

For the sake of her friend's dying wish, she had done more than enough. No one would blame her if she

gave up now.

After all, even an outsider like her knew Tracy was no longer the cherished heiress she once was. Going up against the Millers **at** a time like this wasn't wise.

But in Tracy's calm, steady **eyes**, there was unshakable determination. It **was as** if the **consequences** didn't

**1/8**

Chapter 162 Unjust

matter.

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In that moment, Trina finally understood why her mother had always liked Tracy **so** much.

And with that understanding, when she went home and saw her mother sitting as usual at the computer- glasses on, hunched forward, and searching through the files—she didn't feel annoyed or helpless.

Even though Phoebe had resigned from teaching, she still couldn't let go of the fact that the principal had destroyed the evidence. Whenever she had free time, she combed through her old devices and accounts, hoping to recover something.

If the evidence had been easy to find, it wouldn't have taken her two years to stumble across it in the first place.

Back then, she had turned over every stone, chasing anyone connected to Tracy.

If people wouldn't give her answers, she searched through their social media posts or even paid for their daily photos and videos.

That was why, when someone anonymously accused her of harassing students, she had no way to defend herself.

For months she combed through tens of gigabytes of pictures and videos, frame by frame. Finally, she found a clue from one of Tracy's old roommates.

In a short clip the girl had posted, Tracy appeared for just a second, sitting at her desk sketching.

When Phoebe froze the frame and zoomed in, she saw half of the drawing—a peacock.

.....

The composition and form were unmistakable. It was the very same piece everyone later accused Tracy of plagiarizing.

But the video's timestamp showed it was from shortly after Tracy had started college—earlier than the time Erin had claimed she created her painting.

Finding this evidence had thrilled Phoebe more than winning the lottery. She rushed to confront the principal with it—only to be crushed by the outcome.

Even though the storm had long passed, Trina thought her mother should have let go of her bitterness by

now.

But watching her spend these past days tirelessly digging through old devices and accounts, Trina finally realized—her mother hadn't moved on.

She thought of Tracy, how she had poured so much effort into honoring a friend's last words. She thought of how Tracy had been branded a plagiarist, forced to leave the country, and still mocked even after coming back.

For the first time, Trina felt it wasn't fair. Tracy didn't deserve any of it.

She glanced at Phoebe, hesitated, but didn't step in like she usually did. Instead, she went straight to her

**room.**

Sitting at her desk, she pulled open the bottom drawer and took out **a flash** drive.

**08:18 Wed, 10 Sept 2**

Chapter 162 Unjust

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It was just a plain black stick, nothing remarkable. But the way Trina looked at it—full of hesitation and inner struggle—made it clear that it held something far from ordinary.

373

Chapter 163 Old Wounds

Chapter 163 Old Wounds

Should I give this USB away?

After parting with Trina, Tracy headed straight back to the Jackman Villa

Since Walter's accident, she rarely returned. Some of her belongings still remained at the Jackman Villa, she knew it was time to move them to her rented apartment

To avoid running into the Jackmans, she deliberately came in the afternoon.

By habit, Benjamin and Andrew would be at the office, Daphne and Erin would either be shopping or at a salon, and Liam would be out partying or racing with his friends.

Tracy packed up her things quickly and planned to leave just as swiftly. But as soon as she stepped out the door, she unexpectedly ran into Liam.

He looked pale, almost sick, like someone who had just received terrible news. His eyes were unfocused, his whole demeanor shaken.

Tracy glanced at him once before turning away. She passed by without a word, colder than if he were a

stranger.

That was how it should be between her and the Jackmans—pretend not to know each other, even when they cross paths on the street.

But the moment Liam saw her, it was as if something snapped. He rushed toward her.

“CeeCee, I’m sorry. I didn’t know—I really didn’t know.”

He clutched her arm tightly, his pale face and year-filled eyes giving him a pitiful look.

Tracy, however, felt no sympathy. She tensed, her guard immediately rising.

She tried to pull her arm away, but Liam held on firmly.

With no choice, she stepped back, glaring at him with even more suspicion. “What now, Mr. Liam?” she asked coldly.

Every time he suddenly lost control around her, it never led to anything good.

He didn’t notice her disgust. While still gripping her arm, he spoke with guilt and remorse evident in his voice. “CeeCee, I’m sorry. I didn’t realize how much you’ve been through. I kept misunderstanding you...

When Tracy saw his watery eyes, for a second she wondered—did he somehow find out about what happened at *the* academy?

“You...” Her fists tightened unconsciously. “You know?”

Liam nodded vigorously, and his eyes were filled with a regret that felt almost tangible. “I always thought you had everything you wanted, the best of everything. I thought you were spoiled and greedy, and when

**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept 6**

Chapter 163 Old Wounds

the kidnapping happened, I assumed you staged it yourself to get money from the family.

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“But then I learned the truth—you really had no money. You worked outside—not to get our attention, but just to survive. And for my birthday, you even sold some of your favorite jewelry just to buy me a gift.

This finding left him wracked with guilt. For the first time in his life, he truly understood what it meant to regret something so badly it hurt inside.

Tracy had treated him with nothing but kindness, yet he had doubted her again and again. He even-

When she was kidnapped, he had said the cruelest words, telling the kidnappers to dump her body far away so he wouldn't have to deal with the bad luck.

He couldn't even start to imagine how devastated Tracy must have felt hearing those words over the phone.

As Liam condemned himself in his mind, he failed to notice how Tracy's face had gone pale.

I thought he *knew*...

Tracy suddenly felt like laughing.

Laughing at her own foolishness.

How many times had she been hurt before? How many times had she warned herself not to expect anything from the Jackmans? And yet, she still hadn't learned. She still held on to hope.

If they truly cared about her—if they cared about what she endured at the academy, would they really have done nothing for two years? Would they really wait until she returned home before making the smallest effort to investigate?

If Liam had been paying attention at all, he would've noticed the way her face drained of color.

But he didn't notice a thing.

He just kept speaking with heartfelt remorse. “If Ronald hadn't pointed it out, I'd still be misunderstanding you. GeeCee, you don't blame me, do you?”

His eyes locked onto hers, nervous and pleading, like he meant every word.

But Tracy didn't care what he felt. All she felt was disgust—and a bitter sense of irony.

Ronald had known her for less than six months, and yet he had already seen through her clearly. Liam, on the other hand, needed someone else to remind him before he even started looking into her life.

That alone made her feel pathetic,

With a sharp tug. Tracy finally yanked her hand free.

“The past stays in the past,” she said flatly. “What good does it do for you to bring it up now, Mr. Liam? You seem to forget things easily, so let me remind you—I’m not your sister.”

The emptiness left in his hand, combined with the cold, guarded look in her **eyes**, hit Liam like **a bucket of**

ice water.

**2/3**

**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept**

Chapter 163 Old Wounds

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His face grew even paler as he looked at her. He said hurtfully, “You are telling me this, but you’re still blaming me. I didn’t know—I was kept in the dark too.”

Frantic, he rushed to explain. “Our allowances are wired into our accounts every month by the company’s finance office. If we ran out, we’d just ask Dad, Mom, or Andrew for more. None of us ever thought to check the balance.

“And Andrew canceled your card because you kidnapped Miranda. I didn’t know that the finance office never wired the money into your account after that. If I had known, I would’ve spoken up for you.”

**3/3**

Chapter 164 Misunderstood Apologies

Chapter 164 Misunderstood Apologies

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"If you really think about it, this isn't all on us. If you hadn't kidnapped Miranda and caused her death along with her baby's, Andrew wouldn't have been so furious."

Liam seemed to have found an excuse for himself. His tone, which had been guilty and uncertain, suddenly turned firm. "Sure, this was your mistake. But after Andrew calmed down, you should've said something. If you don't speak up, how are we supposed to know you've had no money all these years? That you were so broke you had to sell your own jewelry?"

By the end, his voice even carried a hint of blame.

Tracy had already stopped expecting anything from him, so his words didn't stir even the smallest reaction in her heart.

She waited calmly for Liam to finish, then replied, "You're right, Mr. Liam. It's all my fault."

Her tone was flat, almost dismissive. "If you're done, may I leave now?"

"You..."

Liam felt like all his heartfelt words were wasted; his guilt was swallowed up by irritation.

He had tried to speak gently and even apologized, and this was her attitude?

Never one to control his temper, he almost snapped at her. But then he thought better of it and pushed it all down.

*Forget it.*

*Tracy is always proud, and*

*after being treated so unfairly for years, it made sense she'd still be mad at me. I should be the bigger person.*

Liam forced himself to swallow his anger. "Let's just say it was our oversight," he said at last. "I'm apologizing now, so don't stay upset over this anymore."

He convinced himself that Tracy's sharp and bitter attitude since coming home must have been because of these old grievances.

Maybe Ronald's reminder had really been Tracy's way of telling them how upset she was.

Thinking that way, Liam's mood shifted. It was as if he completely forgot the guilt and tenderness he'd felt at the start. Without realizing it, his words turned into blame.

"If it were Erin, she would've told us straight out. She wouldn't be upset over something so small. Tracy, you should learn from her."

Tracy's lips twitched—she found this ridiculous, and she was speechless.

She had always known there was no way to make the Jackmans understand her.

So she didn't bother answering. Instead, she slipped past him while he wasn't paying attention and walked

**away.**

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**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept**

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Chapter 164 Misunderstood Apologies

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She moved too quickly. By the time Liam thought of lecturing her more—telling her to learn from Erin again—all he saw was her back disappearing down the hall.

For a moment, he froze, baffled.

He had only wanted to apologize, to explain that he'd misunderstood because he hadn't known the truth. But after just a few exchanges, Tracy had stormed off in anger.

He hadn't even meant to blame her. How had it spun out of control so fast?

As he stood there puzzled, Erin's voice rose softly from behind him. "Liam, is Tracy upset with you again?"

She came forward wearing a look of concern, her big, innocent eyes glistening as if they were about to fill with tears. "Did she get mad at you because of me?"

Before he could answer, she was already sinking into guilt. "If she's upset because of the party, I can explain. I can even apologize to her for Winona's sake."

She never mentioned that Tracy had been dragged away by the police at that party. She didn't remind anyone that Tracy—wrongfully accused—had been the one who deserved comfort and an apology.

Instead, Erin played the part of the gracious, selfless one, making it seem like Tracy was the unreasonable one for not letting go.

And, as always, Liam's thoughts shifted in the direction Erin wanted. "Don't be sad, Erin," he said quickly, his voice gentle. "This isn't your fault. It's Tracy—"

What had Tracy done?

The words stuck in his throat.

He couldn't even think of what Tracy had actually done wrong. But looking at Erin's tearful face, the words had come out without him realizing it.

Erin caught his hesitation. Her carefully crafted look of wounded innocence nearly slipped.

Since the day she had joined this family, she had never again seen Liam show Tracy that same guilt and tenderness.

Just now, for a split second, she thought she was back in those days—so she hurried to use a little trick to keep his focus.

But inside, frustration burned. How could *Liam say such* cruel things *to Tracy one* moment, *yet still look like he* cared *the next*?

Erin bit down on her lip, forcing her voice to tremble as she added, "Liam, no matter what she did, please don't be mad with her. I believe she was just confused and jealous that you've all been so kind to me. She

didn't mean it. I don't blame her

If this had been before, Liam would have looked at her with gratitude and tenderness. He would have tried to comfort her, maybe even make her laugh, and then compared her kindness to Tracy's pride—finding Tracy ungrateful and malicious in the process.

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Chapter

165 Old Friends, New Faces

Chapter 165 Old Friends, New Faces

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Right now, he actually nodded in agreement with Erin. “You’re right,” Liam said. “Maybe she was just confused for a moment. Maybe she was jealous of how much we care about you, and that’s why she wouldn’t say anything.”

He had grown up with Tracy and knew her proud nature better than anyone.

Of course she was jealous of the attention they gave Erin. That was why she always clashed with her. Someone as stubborn as Tracy would never swallow her pride and ask them for money.

Thinking back, Tracy had once loved shopping, but in the past few years, she hadn’t bought anything new.

Liam realized he should have noticed sooner, but it wasn’t until Ronald reminded him that he finally investigated. That was his mistake.

With a sigh, Liam said, “When I get the chance, I’ll go find Tracy and apologize. Even if she doesn’t forgive me, I’ll find a way to make it up to her.”

Maybe, if she saw how sincere he was, she wouldn’t hold a grudge anymore. Maybe it would even ease the tension between her and the rest of the family.

Liam wasn’t the type to sit still. Once the idea struck him, he couldn’t wait another moment. He rushed off to make plans for an apology and some kind of compensation—so fast he didn’t even say goodbye to Erin.

Erin stood frozen, her cheeks still streaked with tears, watching Liam’s back as he hurried away.

It took her a moment to process what had just happened. Then fury shot through her, twisting her face with rage.

Liam! You’re a jerk!

And Tracy!

What a *bitch*!

All these years since she’d come back to the family, never once had the Jackmans thought about Tracy in front of her. Yet now, for the first time, they had—and it was as if Erin no longer existed.

Lately she had been exhausted—trying to stop Franklin and Tracy from digging into Walter’s accident while also scrambling to cover Tom’s endless mess. She had barely spared the Jackmans a thought, let alone noticed the shift in their attention.

Erin was too tired to keep track of what had just happened.

But one thing was clear: she couldn’t just sit by. She had to act fast and pull Liam back to her side.

Leaving the villa, Tracy walked quickly.

Only when the villa disappeared from the rearview mirror did she finally relax.

She was terrified of the Jackmans’ sudden displays of concern.

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**08:19 Wed, 10**

**Sept**

Chapter 165 Old Friends, New Faces

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Every time, it came dressed up as if they did it for her own good, and it always ended up pushing her closer to the edge.

Liam’s reaction had rattled her—enough that she couldn’t bring herself to return for several days.

Her mind was elsewhere anyway. The thought of Patricia—the girl who might have been the classmate who leapt from the rooftop years ago—had consumed her attention.

But digging into Patricia’s past wasn’t easy. Someone had deliberately hidden her records, and Tracy tried not to make any reckless moves. She worried that if she pressed too hard, the people behind it would destroy the last pieces of evidence.

Since Patricia’s trail led nowhere, Tracy turned her focus to Winona instead.

She remembered that back in high school, Winona had a constant shadow—a sidekick named Jasmin Norman.

Their families had both worked in the jewelry trade, and the Normans’ business had relied heavily on the Millers. Back in high school, Jasmin and Winona had practically been twins.

As Tracy's sworn enemy, Jasmin had often helped Winona make her life miserable. Tracy remembered her vividly.

What she didn't expect was that in just a few years, everything had changed. The Normans had gone bankrupt, and Jasmin had vanished.

It took Tracy a lot of digging, but she finally tracked Jasmin down in the next city over.

Gone was the girl who used to flaunt jewelry on her neck and wrists. In her place stood a tired woman in a grease-stained apron, bussing tables and washing dishes *at* a diner.

When Jasmin saw Tracy, she froze for a second, clearly recognizing her.

But instead of acknowledging it, she quickly plastered on a server's smile. "Hello, doll. What would you like today? Here's our menu—we've *got*

all kinds of dishes."

Her voice was warm and professional, just like she was talking to any ordinary customer.

Tracy ignored the script and cut straight to the point. "We're old friends, Jasmin. It's been a long time."

Jasmin's smile faltered for a moment before she smoothed it back in place. "You must be joking, Ms. Jackman, You're Cloudville's most adored princess. I'm just a waitress drowning in debt. How could we ever be friends?"

When the Normans had gone under, Erin had only just returned to the family. Jasmin had been too busy surviving to follow entertainment news, so she had no idea what had happened to Tracy in those years.

Tracy didn't bother explaining. Instead, after a quick word with the diner's owner, she took Jasmin across the street to a coffee shop for a private talk.

It seemed Jasmin hadn't been in one for years. She sat stiffly, clutching her cup in both hands, her posture awkward and unsure.

Watching her, **Tracy** suddenly saw her old self reflected back.

**2/3**

**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept**

Chapter 165 Old Friends, New Faces



When she had first left the academy, she too had felt small and nervous everywhere she went.

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She'd been afraid of people's stares, afraid of crowded places. No matter what she did, she carried herself- like someone who didn't belong.

**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept!**

Chapter 166 Winona's Misdeed

Her old friends and family all turned against her. They treated her like a disgrace, a walking joke.

All except Ronald.

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Only he stayed firmly by her side. He gave her trust and confidence, reminding her again and again that she wasn't as worthless as others made her believe.

At that moment, Tracy realized her life wasn't the hopeless mess she once thought.

In her darkest hours, she had met true friends at the academy—friends willing to risk their lives for her.

At her lowest point, she had found Ronald..

And she still had her grandfather and Walter, who never abandoned her.

Maybe it was because she saw a reflection of herself in Jasmin, but Tracy's tone softened. "Relax, I just want to ask you a few questions."

She had already looked into Jasmin's situation and was fully aware of what she had been through.

After the Normans went bankrupt, her father died in a car accident. Her mother survived but lost a leg.

The two of them were left with millions in debt, forced to work odd jobs just to get by. The once-spoiled girl who used to blow through tens of thousands in a single shopping trip had been worn down by life.

Jasmin, who had once mocked Tracy whenever she saw her, simply lowered her head and nodded, her pride gone.

Holding back her emotions, Tracy went straight to the point. “Back in high school, you were always glued to Winona. You must know a lot about her, right?”

Jasmin’s head snapped up. The nervous look in her eyes instantly shifted to a storm of anger and hate.

The change was so strange it caught Tracy off guard; her prepared speech stuck in her throat.

No one had known Winona and Jasmin were inseparable better than Tracy.

She’d even heard it was Winona who helped cover the Normans’ debts after the bankruptcy.

So why was Jasmin reacting like this?

Tracy’s thoughts were interrupted by Jasmin’s voice. “What exactly do you want to know about Winona?”

Judging by her tone, she almost seemed eager to spill everything she knew.

Tracy didn’t push about their personal fallout. Instead, she asked about what she came for. “Back then, the girl who jumped off the roof the day before the SATS—Patricia Vesper. Did you know her?”

Jasmin’s eyes widened in shock, her face paling. “W—why are you asking about that?”

Tracy noticed every flicker of her expression. Her grip on the coffee cup tightened.

**1/3**

08:19 Wed, **10 Sept**

Chapter 166 Winona’s Misdeed

*Did Jasmin have something to do with Patricia’s death?*

Leaning forward, Tracy asked, “Patricia killed herself ... Was it because you bullied her?”

“It wasn’t me—it was Winona!”

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Jasmin suddenly grew agitated, her voice rising enough to make other customers in the café glance their

way.

But Tracy didn't flinch. Her face stayed calm, her eyes sharp with thought.

Jasmin's outburst told her exactly what she needed to know.

But it wasn't enough—she needed the whole truth.

"What really happened back then?" Tracy asked steadily. "Why did Patricia jump?"

It was only one day before the SATS. What could have driven Patricia to such despair and hatred that she would leap from the rooftop?

Jasmin's face drained of color. She lowered her eyes, unable to look Tracy in the face. She seemed unwilling to drag those memories into the light.

But before Tracy could press her, Jasmin spoke on her own. "Patricia was driven to her death by Winona."

She drew a long breath, then slowly began to reveal everything.

Patricia had been the only student accepted into Sunderpeak High with near-perfect scores. From her freshman year, Winona had her in her sights.

No one knew why it started, but Winona never stopped finding ways to torment her.

At first, it seemed harmless—asking Patricia to fetch water and to bring her breakfast. Then it turned cruel; she tore up her homework, tossed her books, slapped her, and locked her in bathrooms.

Bullying in school isn't like the watered-down versions shown on TV. It was far uglier.

Patricia endured it all, year after year, from freshman through 12th grade.

And still, she never let her grades slip. She remained at the top of the class, as though none of it could touch her.

But that strength only fueled Winona's rage. By the month before the SATs, the bullying had reached a breaking point.

One day, Winona pretended to be Patricia's friend and even visited her home, meeting her grandmother. That was the first time Patricia ever fought back—she slapped Winona across the face.

But real life **wasn't** a story where the victim's courage changes everything. Instead of stopping, Winona

doubled down.

She dragged Patricia to the school rooftop, ordered others to rip her clothes, filmed the scene, **and** uploaded the video online for the world to see.

213

**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept**

Chapter 166 Winona's Misdeed

Winona wasn't finished. After visiting Patricia's house, she secretly stole her diary.

Inside, every page revealed Patricia's innocent hopes and private crushes.

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**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept**

Chapter 167 Hidden Agenda

Chapter 167 Hidden Agenda

The person she loved was David.

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David was an abandoned baby Patricia's grandmother had taken in and raised. When he was a teenager, his family found him and brought him home, giving him the name David Renault.

That was the man Tracy had known.

David and Patricia weren't related by blood, but Winona didn't care. Even if she had known the truth, it wouldn't have mattered.

What she cared about was that Patricia had broken the societal rules by falling in love with her brother.

Winona saw it as the perfect weapon to control Patricia.

She got hold of Patricia's diary and used it to blackmail her. Winona forced Patricia to cheat on the SAT and even told her to get caught on purpose. If she refused, Winona

threatened to post her diary online and show her grandmother the videos she had secretly recorded.

For three long years, Patricia had endured relentless bullying. Yet she still fought to *stay at* the top class, holding on because the SAT was her one chance to change everything.

That test was the hope that kept her going.

She believed that once it was over, she would finally be free.

of her

Patricia's greatest secret was used against her. Winona wasn't just out to ruin what mattered most—she dragged Patricia's grandmother into *it* too. After three years of bottled-up pain and humiliation, everything finally burst.

In despair, Patricia climbed to the rooftop. With bitterness and grief boiling inside her, she stepped off the edge and jumped off the building.

"After it happened, Winona panicked," Jasmin said quietly, her hands gripping her coffee cup so hard they trembled. Her face had gone pale. "She deleted the videos, burned the diary, and warned all of us never to mention what she'd done to Patricia.

"Patricia's grandmother didn't believe her granddaughter would kill herself. She stormed into the school, demanding answers—but she only came once. After that, she never returned. Patricia's school record was changed to say she withdrew on her own. I know Winona was behind that."

Jasmin's voice trembled, but her words were sharp. "I remember Winona saying she'd already grown tired of playing with Patricia. She had planned to leave her alone after the SAT. But Patricia was too fragile and jumped off the roof.

"Winona called her a jinx, and it was boring to toy with her. Said she ruined the fun and nearly dragged her into trouble,"

Jasmin wasn't loud, but she spoke it clearly.

Every word felt like a hammer pounding into Tracy's chest.

**08:19 Wed, 10 Sept**

Chapter 167 Hidden Agenda

Her hands clenched so hard on her lap that her nails nearly broke the skin.

Then, all at once, she lifted her head—catching Jasmin’s wide, nervous eyes.

Her sudden glance up startled Jasmin, who quickly ducked her head, flustered and uneasy.

She looked away fast, but Tracy still caught the flicker of expectation and excitement in her eyes.

## **+20 Free Coins**

Yes, Tracy was furious when she learned the truth, but she wasn’t about to let anger drown out her reason.

Back in high school, Jasmin had been one of Winona’s most loyal followers. If she knew this much, she wouldn’t have just been a bystander.

Winona had her little circle, and Patricia’s torment had come from more than one person.

Tracy wasn’t the same gullible girl as before.

Jasmin was so eager to pin all the blame on Winona. It wasn’t just about clearing her own name—Tracy suspected she also wanted to use her as a weapon against Winona.

Tracy forced down her anger and pulled a photo from her pocket. “Take a good look. Is this Patricia?”

Trina had helped her find the photo. Tracy had already compared it to the memory of the girl she’d seen leap from the roof years ago.

Still, she needed absolute certainty. If there was even the faintest chance David’s sister was alive, she had to hold onto it.

She couldn’t let David die with that regret forever unhealed.

Jasmin studied the picture carefully before nodding with certainty. “Yes. That’s Patricia.”

In that moment, Tracy’s fragile hope shattered. Her hand shook, and the coffee sloshed over the rim, spilling onto her skin like ice water, sinking straight into her chest.

Noticing her reaction, Jasmin spoke up quickly. “I remember the homeroom teacher saying that several top universities had already reached out to Patricia. She had such a bright future. All she needed was to finish the SAT. But Winona ruined it—she destroyed Patricia’s life. Patricia was pushed to her death!”

Tracy’s lips pressed into a thin, cold line, her face emotionless.

Jasrnin was right—Patricia had been driven to her death.

But was Winona the only one responsible?

Tracy's gaze lingered on Jasmin, and she suddenly asked, "I remember you used to be Winona's closest friend. So why do you look like you hate her so much now?"

At that, Jasmin panicked. Her head dropped even lower, and she didn't answer.

It was clear she was afraid of something.

Tracy's eyes narrowed, and after a pause, she cut straight through her silence. "You never asked how I knew Patricia. You never cared why I came here looking for her. You went straight to blaming Winona—as if you

**2/3**

Chapter 167 Hidden Agenda

were waiting for me to hear it."

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**3/3**

Chapter 168 Buried Hatreds

Tracy asked, "Are you trying to use me to get back at Winona?"

**42%**

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The moment Tracy asked the question, Jasmin's whole body stiffened. It was so obvious; anyone could have seen it—Tracy had struck right at the heart of her thoughts.

Not letting the silence stretch too long, Tracy pressed on, her voice calm but sharp. "Why do you hate Winona so much? From what I've heard, back when your family was drowning in debt, it was Winona who stepped in and paid it off. Shouldn't you be grateful to her instead of hating her?"

"Grateful?" Jasmin's laugh was short and bitter. "Why should I thank her? The only reason we ended up like this is because of her. Every single thing that happened to us was her fault!"

Her voice rose with each word until she was practically shouting. Tracy's questions had struck a nerve. Her face twisted with unrestrained anger, her eyes flashing with a hatred that had clearly been festering for

years.

Tracy didn't flinch. Her expression remained steady, unshaken. "So you're saying Winona caused your family to go bankrupt?"

Now that the words were out, Jasmin no longer saw a reason to hold anything back.

She let out a harsh laugh, almost mocking herself. "Not just us. Look closely at those who used to follow around Winona back then. How many of them ended up like me—or worse?"

It was as though a dam had broken inside her. The bitterness, bottled up for years, finally had somewhere to go. Jasmin poured it all out, her tone cutting, her words drenched in venom.

"Do you want to know what makes me the most furious? Everyone knows it was Winona who pushed her to the edge, and drove her to her death. Yet look at us—we all suffered, every single one of us. But her? Winona just kept climbing higher and higher, still living like the pampered rich girl."

For the first time, Tracy's composure cracked, doubt flickering in her eyes.

She recalled the crowd that had once surrounded Winona.

Yes, their families weren't as powerful as the Millers, but they weren't nobodies either. There was no way the Millers could have wiped them all out at once,

Her thoughts raced. Piece by piece, she sifted through every possible explanation until only one question remained. "Is there someone backing the Millers?"

Tracy's calm never wavered, and little by little, Jasmin's fury burned itself out. It took her a while to regain her composure.

"I don't know for sure," she admitted, shaking her head, "but with the Millers' resources, there's no way they could have pulled it off flawlessly. No traces, no witnesses, nothing left behind. In Cloudville, the only ones capable of that are your family"

Tracy didn't react outwardly, ignoring the probing look Jasmin threw her way.

Instead, she sank into her thoughts. Yes, in Cloudville, the Jackmans were unmatched, but the world didn't



1/3

08:19

Wed, 10 Sept

## Chapter 168 Buried Hatreds

end at Cloudville's borders. Beyond it were powers far greater, stronger, and more ruthless.

And in her heart, Tracy already knew who fit the role.

She had the answer she came for, and she saw no reason to stay any longer.

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Setting down her coffee cup, she rose from her chair. But after she took a few steps, something nagged at her. She turned back, eyes narrowing slightly on Jasmin. "One more thing. Why Patricia? Of all the people Winona could have targeted, why her?"

School bullying is cruel and unforgivable, but Winona's choice had always puzzled her. Why Patricia, specifically?

Jasmin's lips twisted as though she found the question amusing. She let out a short, bitter laugh. "Most people wouldn't know, but I do."

She leaned back, her eyes glinting. "The Millers weren't always rich. Before middle school, Winona lived in a remote town with her grandmother. Her father only struck it lucky later, after buying up a bunch of cheap land and resources. That windfall turned him into a millionaire, and that's when he dragged Winona to Cloudville and started spending a fortune to mold her into a high-society socialite."

Her tone sharpened with scorn. "Because of that past, Winona hated anyone calling her family new money. She hated being reminded of the small-town nobody she once was. And then Patricia showed up at a school full of rich kids. She was the perfect reminder. Patched clothes, eating plain bread and butter like it was fine dining, staring wide-eyed at lab equipment like she had never seen the world before. Everything about Patricia reminded Winona of her former self."

Jasmin tilted her head back and gave Tracy a mocking smile. "That's why Winona hated Patricia even more than she hated you."

Tracy wasn't surprised that Winona despised herself—she'd sensed that from the very first time they met. But to learn that this was the reason Winona bullied Patricia? It was ridiculous and absurd.

Tracy's face grew tight with anger. Jasmin recalled something and asked, "Do you know why Winona despises you so much? Even though her family could never rival yours, and even though her father told her more than once to stay on *good* terms with you, she never hid her hatred."

Tracy blinked. She had never thought about it.

Back then, she'd been too proud to even bother with Winona.

Jasmin didn't wait for her to reply. She had just been holding in her resentment for far too long and needed to let it out.

"She hates you because you were Cloudville's most beloved princess—the heiress everyone adored."

Tracy was taken aback. That reason was just as absurd as the last

Is *there* something wrong with Winona's brain?

If all it took was that Winona hated her from the very first time they met simply because of who she was, why was she so close to Erin now?

**2/3**

42

Chapter 168 Buried Hatreds

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These days, Erin was the new darling of Cloudville, spoiled and treasured by the Jackmans even more than Tracy had ever been.

For reasons she couldn't explain, Tracy suddenly remembered something Chris had texted her after their showdown.

**3/3**

Chapter 169 Unexpected Allies

Chapter 169 Unexpected Allies

He said Erin had a special charm on her.

For a moment. Tracy felt an odd, almost ridiculous sense of unease swirling inside her.

It came out of nowhere and vanished just as quickly, like a passing illusion.

By the time she snapped back, Jasmin had already called her name several times.

“What are you thinking about?”

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Tracy lowered her eyes and said nothing for a while before sitting back down. “Since you want revenge on Winona, and I want to deal with her too, why don’t we work together?”

She had failed to keep her promise to David, but Patricia’s revenge—she had to **see** it through.

The two of them stayed in that café for more than two hours. No one knew what they talked about.

Even Tracy’s sudden trip back to Cloudville that same day remained a secret to everyone—except Ronald.

Two days later, Tracy brought Ronald to a quiet cemetery on the edge of the city.

She had planned to come alone, but Ronald insisted on going with her, and she couldn’t refuse. Following the clues Jasmin had given her, she found Patricia and her grandmother’s graves. Patricia’s grandmother had spent her entire life’s savings to buy the plot.

After burying her granddaughter, the old woman was killed in a car accident on her way home.

The driver fled the scene and was never caught.

With no family left, the charity workers pitied her and buried her alongside her granddaughter.

The graves, left untended, were covered with weeds.

Tracy and Ronald said nothing. They simply pulled the weeds and cleaned the area in silence.

When they had removed all the weed, Tracy finally asked, “Do you think the hit—and—run was an accident?” Ronald knew she was asking his opinion. “I’ve never believed in coincidences like that,” he replied.

Tracy pressed her lips together and said, “Neither do I

She would uncover the truth and avenge Patricia, her grandmother, and David.

Tracy vowed to get revenge for them.

Ronald noticed the fire burning in her eyes.

He had a tinge of suspicion why Tracy had gone missing for two days, but he didn't know the full story.

08:20 Wed, **10 Sept** O

Chapter 169 Unexpected Allies

After a moment, he asked, "CeeCee, did you find anything?"

Her gaze stayed fixed on the headstone as she nodded. "Patricia's death is tied to the Renaults."

The Renaults were as powerful as the Jackmans, maybe even stronger.

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With her current situation, she could barely defend herself from the Jackmans, let alone the Renaults.

Tracy knew pretending ignorance was the safest choice.

But she also remembered: back at the academy, if they had all chosen to play dumb, she would've suffered an even darker fate—maybe she would ended up dead.

Ronald caught the dark aura that radiated from her, and his brow furrowed slightly.

Did *CeeCee have some personal grudge against the Renaults?*

Tracy interrupted his thought and asked, "Ron, can you do me a favor?"

That nickname—Ron—was something Ronald had once demanded after she met Liam.

At first, Tracy didn't feel close enough to Ronald to use such an intimate nickname.

But Ronald was like a jealous kid, stubborn and playful, pulling every trick to make her give in. He cooked for her every day, piling her plate with delicious food until she had gained a few pounds. Her complexion looked healthier. Eventually, he wore her down.

From the day they met, Tracy knew Ronald had a childlike personality, with a mind that jumped from one thought to another.

She had assumed he only wanted her to call him that because Liam had insulted him, and he wanted to prove a point.

But the first time she actually said the name, Ronald looked at her with utter seriousness. "CeeCee, I'll never treat you like Liam did. I promise."

Tracy had thought her heart had turned completely cold, but in that instant, it softened.

Later, the nickname became second nature, and Ronald grew fond of hearing her call him that.

What thrilled him now, though, was that Tracy had finally asked him for help.

In all the time they'd known each other, this was the first time.

Ronald agreed without a second thought. "CeeCee, whatever it is, I'll help. If I can't, I'll find a way to do

that

Tracy didn't hold back. "I want you to take me to an investor conference in two weeks. The Renaults are hosting it here in Cloudville."

Events like that required invitations Ordinary people couldn't just walk in.

But **she** knew Ronald could.

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**42%**

Chapter 169 Unexpected Allies

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She still didn't know exactly who he was or where he came from, but she'd noticed something about the way he handled things at the apartment. He never acted behind her back, and nothing seemed to happen. without his knowledge.

Tracy couldn't explain it fully, but she vaguely sensed that, if anyone could get her an invitation to the investor conference, it was Ronald.

She just wasn't certain how hard it would be for him.

**3/3**

## Chapter 170 Tracy Asks for His Help

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Ronald never expected that the first time Tracy asked him for help, it would be for something so simple. For a moment, he didn't even know how to respond.

When she saw his silence, Tracy thought it must be too difficult. "It's fine," she said quickly. "If it's hard for you, I'll figure something else out."

"You have come to me for help? How hard could it be?" Ronald finally answered, snapping out of it. "I just didn't think the first time you'd ask me for help, it'd be over something this small."

He bent down a little, meeting her eyes. "If you ever need help with anything, just tell me. I don't want you to be so polite with me."

His gaze was steady and sincere.

Tracy thought back and realized Ronald had always been this way with her—straightforward, honest, and easy to be around. For the first time in a long while, she felt like she could relax..

She looked at him for a long moment, then nodded. "Since you put it that way, there is something I need your help with."

When she finally spoke, Ronald's eyes lit up instantly. "Whatever you need, CeeCee, just say it."

Facing his eager, genuine expression, Tracy felt oddly embarrassed.

She cleared her throat and said, "I—I was hoping to borrow some money."

Ronald blinked, stunned. "What?"

Asking to borrow money was awkward enough, but the amount Tracy had in mind worsened it. She knew neither of them lived the kind of life where you could casually hand over six figures,

But after seeing Patricia and her grandmother's graves today, she felt she had to do something.

Choosing her words carefully, she said, "I probably won't be able to pay you back the full amount in a short time, but I could do installments. The interest—"

Ronald quickly cut her off before she could finish. “CeeCee, have you really never checked the debit card I gave you?”

His voice carried a note of helplessness. “I’ve been depositing money into it every month. That’s for your rent, your living expenses, and what I owed you for saving me. Every dollar in there belongs to you.”

In truth, the money Ronald kept for himself wasn’t even as much as Tracy made from a single commission. He couldn’t lend her more.

Tracy had never once checked that card.

She always considered it to be Ronald’s one-time payment to her, and since she hadn’t planned to take **it**, she left it alone. She never imagined he had been adding money month after month.

Her gut told her the balance had to be large by now.

08:20 Wed, 10 Sept

#### Chapter 170 Tracy Asks for His Help

She frowned slightly, then shook her head with quiet firmness. “You don’t need to give me that.”

Ronald wasn’t surprised. He had expected her refusal.

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He glanced at the freshly cleaned graves nearby and said thoughtfully, “I know what you mean, but whether you’re going up against the Renaults or handling other things, you’ll need money. That money’s just sitting there anyway. Use it. If it makes you feel better, think of it as a loan—with no interest.”

One day, he hoped, she would finally stop being so guarded with him.

When that happened, whether she ever paid him back wouldn’t matter anymore.

His words eased her heart a little.

He was right—whatever she had to face, money was part of it.

Still, if he insisted on giving it as a gift, she would rather find her own way.

Once Tracy was sure about the purpose of the money and how she would use it, she went back that very day to check the balance on the debit card.

To her shock, Ronald had already transferred over five million dollars into the account.

How had he *managed that*?

Although she felt stunned and curious, she chose not to pry into his secrets.

Instead, she quietly withdrew nearly 300,000 dollars. With it, she purchased graves for Patricia and her grandmother—and ten more empty plots in the same cemetery.

The cemetery was small, tucked away on the edge of the city. Most people didn't consider it desirable, so very few had bought plots there over the years.

But to Tracy, its stillness and peace made it the perfect resting place.

Ronald had no idea why she would buy so many plots at once, but he could feel the sorrow clinging to her like a shadow.

It was the kind of loneliness that came from being cast aside by the world—forced to keep living when your heart wanted to stop.

A sharp pain pricked at Ronald's chest.

He stepped closer, forcing a lightness into his voice. "CeeCee, why so many graves?"

Her distant gaze slowly shifted to the ten empty plots. She stayed silent so long that Ronald thought she wouldn't answer.

But finally, she whispered, "They're for my friends."

She paused, then continued, "Over the last two years, I've watched them die, one by one, for all sorts of reasons. And I couldn't even bury them. I don't even know where their bodies ended up or if they were still whole when they were thrown away."