

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

## **#Left Behind 241 - Read The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late Left Behind 241**

Chapter 241 Sympathy

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Erin was stressing so much over something that she was literally losing her hair, and she could not tell anyone—she had to handle it on her own.

Even so, her fiancé, Norris, could tell something was off.

He had asked her a few times, worried, but Erin just brushed him off.

He figured it was some minor girl problem and did not push. Still, he *took* out a birthday party invite.

Norris had looked into Tracy's background at the Angelic Etiquette Academy for Erin, partly because he had once been engaged to Tracy and felt a twinge of guilt.

So, he had been getting this apology gift ready for quite a while.

Erin did not know why he had gotten it, but when she saw the name "Jane Nicholls" on the invitation, her eyes went wide.

"Wait, Jane Nicholls? The international painter? I thought she lived overseas. How is she having a party here?"

Jane was a big deal. The lecturers in Erin's college had talked about her, but since she usually stayed abroad, few people ever got the chance to meet her.

Seeing Erin's reaction, Norris smiled, confident he had chosen well.

"This is her first big appearance here. With your skills, Erin, I know you can talk to her."

Erin's face lit up, and she hugged him tight. "Norris, you're the best!"

Norris ruffled her hair gently. "Silly, you're the one I love most. Who else should I spoil if not you?"

Even as he said it, Tracy popped into his head.

However, he quickly shoved the thought aside and held Erin tighter, like he was trying to erase the guilt in his chest.

Meanwhile, Tracy shivered, feeling uneasy,

Walking beside her, Ronald noticed immediately. “Are you cold?”

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They were making their way through a dim underground passage, with only the wall lights, faintly glowing, and the lack of outside light made it feel pretty cold.

Tracy shook her head, saying nothing, and picked up her pace.

After Erin’s mistake was exposed, they did not rush back to Cloudville. Instead, they sneaked to a hidden basement where Tom had “disappeared” recently.

In the dark, damp basement full of creepy tools, Tom was tied to a chair, blindfolded, and completely panicked when he heard someone approach.

“Who ... Who are you? Don’t hurt me! I’ve got money! I’ll pay, just let me go!”

As he pleaded, he wondered who could have done this.

He had made enemies, sure, but he was rich and usually paid them off. Only Erin might have the guts, but he doubted it.

Suddenly, the blindfold was ripped off.

Blinded by the sudden light, he instinctively closed his eyes, then slowly opened them. His gaze immediately landed on the woman standing before him.

He knew her. Tracy Yarwood.

“You ... I never did anything to you, so why are you kidnapping me?”

Tracy stood in front of them, her cold eyes looking down. “Since won’t waste any more words.

“Are you holding some kind of leverage over Erin?”

you admit you know me, I

Her question caught Tom off guard. His expression wavered as he avoided her gaze.

“I—I don’t... I don’t know what you’re talking about.

“I’m telling you, what you’re doing right now is illegal. You’d better let me go, or I’ll make sure you rot in prison!”

Once he realized it was Tracy who had kidnapped him, he straightened up, his eyes full of disdain and contempt,

Tracy was not surprised by his denial; her face stayed cold and unreadable.

As Tom shouted and threatened her, she turned toward a table full of tools and picked the smallest, most unassuming knife.

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Seeing her walk toward him with the knife, Tom laughed mockingly. “You think you can threaten me? Hehe, you dare... Ah!”

He did not finish his sentence before a sharp, horrifying scream escaped his lips.

Tracy did not hesitate to stab the knife into Tom’s leg.

Blood spurted everywhere, some of it splashing onto her face, but she did not even flinch.

It was as if she had faced scenes like this countless times before.

Ronald had not expected her sudden move. He froze, staring at her profile framed by the splattered blood. Instead of feeling scared, he felt a strange pang of sympathy.

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Ronald had done his homework on Tracy, so he knew exactly what kind of person she had

been.

Just how much had she gone through to become the way she was now?

Tracy could feel Ronald's intense gaze on her, but she did not look back. Her eyes stayed locked on Tom's face, which was twisted in pain.

"I'll ask one more time," she said slowly. "Do you have dirt on Erin?"

As she spoke, she slowly twisted the knife lodged in Tom's leg. Her movements were so controlled and graceful that it looked more like she was carving a sculpture than doing something bloody and cruel.

Her calm voice in Tom's ears felt like a devil whispering.

"Ah! Okay! Okay! I'll talk!"

Cold sweat was dripping down Tom's face as he screamed and begged. The mockery in his eyes had completely vanished, and it was now replaced by fear.

He could tell she really wanted to kill him.

She's *insane!* She's a *total*

*psycho!*

Tracy stopped twisting the knife but did not pull it out. Her eyes said, "If your answer doesn't satisfy me, I'll keep going."

Reading her expression, Tom did not dare hold anything back. "I know Erin's biggest secret— she's not even the Jackmans' real daughter!"

Tracy had imagined countless possible secrets about Erin, but she had not expected this.

Without hesitation, she twisted the knife again. Tom's whole body jerked, his screams echoing

in the basement.

“You’re telling me,” she said sharply, “that when Erin suddenly showed up, the Jackmans- every single one of them—went to four or five different agencies for DNA tests, and I’m supposed to believe you?”

With the Jackmans’ status, no one could just show up with a random DNA report and be accepted. The tests were strict, thorough, and done in secret.

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Back then, even Tracy had been dragged through several DNA tests before it was confirmed she was not blood–related to the Jackmans, while Erin was proven to be their real daughter.

“Ah! I’m not lying! I swear I’m not lying!”

Tom squirmed in pain, but his hands and feet were tied tight, and the chair was bolted to the floor. So, struggling was pointless.

“I don’t know how she pulled it off,” he blurted out, “but Erin is not the Jackmans’ blood. She’s my half–sister–same mom, different dad!

“Years ago, my mom remarried a man with the surname Yarwood. Not long after, she gave birth to Erin. She was born at home because we couldn’t afford a hospital. I was in the next room, so there’s no way there was some hospital baby mix–up.

“I’ve been using that truth to blackmail her for money all these years. But that’s all! I never helped her hurt you. I swear I’m innocent!”

Tracy studied every twitch and flinch on his face.

He was terrified, desperate to spill everything just to save himself. He did not seem like he was lying.

However, the DNA results were real. So if Tom was telling the truth, how had Erin changed every single test result?

Back then, the Jackmans had been extra careful to avoid tampering. Each person secretly went to different labs and got rushed results.

Even the family members themselves did not know which agencies the others had used.

Whatever Erin was hiding, it was seriously twisted.

Seeing there was nothing more to squeeze out of Tom, Tracy finally stopped.

When she stepped out of the basement, the sunlight was so bright she could not open right away.

her

eyes

Once she adjusted, she stared at the sky for a moment, dazed,

After a long silence, she murmured, "It's so cold."

She did not even know if she was talking about the basement or something else.

The next moment, a cool hand wrapped around hers—blood and all—like it was pulling her

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out of the darkness.

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Tracy turned her head and saw Ronald, who had been silent the whole time, holding her hand. His smile was just as bright and carefree as always.

She tilted her head, looking genuinely confused. "You're not scared of me?"

The way she had acted just now... Even she would have been scared if she had seen herself for the first time.

However, Ronald did not even blink. His smile did not waver. "Would you ever treat me like that?"

Tracy froze for a second, then instantly got what he meant.

No, she would never do that to him.

So, of course, he was not afraid.

She smiled faintly and dropped the topic. The heavy feeling hanging over her earlier had noticeably lifted.

Looking down at the lock of hair in her hand, her expression turned thoughtful.

It was Tom's hair.

If what he had said was true, then he and Erin were definitely related by blood.

Now the real problem was figuring out how to get Erin's DNA without her having the slightest clue.

## Chapter 243 Looking for Someone

Tracy could not let Erin know about Tom just yet. That woman was way too strange. If she found out Tom had been caught, the lead Tracy had worked so hard to get might disappear before she could use it.

Noticing Tracy staring at the hair in her hand, Ronald guessed exactly what she was thinking.

As if he were showing off, he pulled out a fancy, gold-embossed invitation and handed it to

her.

Tracy opened it, curious. When she saw what it was, party?"

her eyes lit

"Ms. Nicholls's birthday up.

Seeing how happy she was, Ronald smiled and raised a brow. "You've told me before how much you admire Ms. Nicholls, so when I heard she was having a birthday party here, I made sure to get you an invitation."

Tracy really was thrilled.

Ever since she had gotten into painting, Jane had been her idol.

Even the Jackmans could not easily get in touch with her, so Tracy had always regretted never meeting her in person. She did not expect Ronald to actually make it happen.

Even though she knew she should not pry into Ronald's business, she could not help asking, "How'd you manage this?"

"That wasn't really me," Ronald said, not taking the credit.

He pointed at the name printed on the invitation—there was a big "T" written there.

"Once I knew you liked Ms. Nicholls, I reached out to her only official social media account overseas using this account, mostly to show her your work.

"Honestly, I didn't expect much, but she really liked it. When she heard you were in the country, she said she was coming here too and wanted to meet you in person. She sent that invitation herself.

"So really, you earned it with your own talent."

That "T" account was something Ronald handled completely, and Tracy had never imagined he would prepare such a big surprise for her.

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Then he added another piece of news that made her even more interested. "Erin will be there

too."

He had been keeping tabs on Jane, so of course, he knew Norris was also looking for her.

And with Norris's connections, the only reason he would want to meet Jane would be because

of Erin.

So, Ronald had quietly helped things along, making sure Norris got an invitation—basically setting up the perfect trap.

At a crowded party like that, getting Erin's DNA would be easy.

Tracy understood exactly why he had chosen this moment to hand her the invitation. She did not refuse it, but she still said seriously, "Thanks."

Jane's birthday party was extravagant, packed with famous people from the art world, plus many guests who had traveled from far away just to attend.



The lavish vibe was so different from Jane's usual calm and elegant image that some people even wondered if it was a scam.

However, it was not long before someone explained, "Actually, this party is being hosted by Ms. Nicholls's niece. It's her way of welcoming her back to the country.

"This is Ms. Nicholls's first time showing up here, so of course it has to be lively. Anything less wouldn't suit her status.

"I heard the real reason Ms. Nicholls agreed to let her niece host this is because she's looking for someone."

"Looking for someone? Why would Ms. Nicholls throw such a huge party just to find a person? And who's she even looking for?"

The party had not officially started yet, but small groups were already chatting in corners.

One group happened to include Erin.

With the Jackmans behind her, she had already made a name for herself back in college, so of course, she drew attention here, especially since most of the crowd were big names in the art world.

A few people right next to her had been whispering about who Jane might be looking for.

Then, a girl holding a mini cake suddenly piped up, "Actually, I think I know."

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Everyone turned to look. She had a cute, round face, wide, bright eyes, and that kind of cheerful energy that instantly made people curious.

She popped the last bite of cake into her mouth, chewed, swallowed, and then grabbed a wet wipe from the table to clean her hands and mouth.

The move was not too elegant, maybe kind of cute, but in a room full of people in designer gowns and perfect makeup, it stood out like she had not gotten the "fancy party" memo.

A few people frowned at her, but since she had just dangled a juicy bit of gossip, no one told her off.

Once she was done, she said, “I heard Ms. Nicholls is looking for someone who goes by the username ‘T.’ Just the letter T.

“Apparently, they’re insanely talented at painting—super bold but also really subtle. My guess? Ms. Nicholls is impressed and wants to meet them.”

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“Ms. Nicholls doesn’t even know this person’s real name,” the girl went on, “just that she’s from Cloudville and that she’s a girl.”

She clearly knew more than everyone else, but the info she gave was so little that it felt impossible to actually track the person down.

People started talking in low voices, following the tiny clue. However, Erin, who had been quiet the whole time, kept her eyes on the girl, her expression thoughtful.

Out of nowhere, Erin asked, “Where’d you hear all this?”

Her question seemed to jolt the others, who all turned to the girl and echoed, “Yeah, how do you know?”

The girl blinked, looking completely sincere. “Ms. Nicholls’s niece told me herself. And seriously, why would I lie? What would I even get out of it?”

That made sense, but people still wondered. “Then why tell us?”

“Because I’m curious, duh,” the girl said. “There are so many of you here—and you’re all women—so I thought maybe ‘T’ could be one of you.

“And hey, if I help find her, maybe I’ll get to meet Ms. Nicholls too!”

Everyone rolled their

eyes.

Who would say something like that out loud? Whose daughter is this?

Was she not embarrassed?

Yet, no one called her out, because honestly, if they were in her shoes, they would be thinking the same thing.

Who in this industry would not want to get close to Jane?

Erin stayed quiet, but in her mind, she was thinking the same thing... plus a little more,

Someone Jane personally praised? That person's starting line was already way ahead of most people in the field. And yet Jane had never met her, so she did not even know their name.

eyes narrowed slightly. "This "T" you're talking about... have they ever shown their face

Erin's

on her account?"

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The girl's eyes lit up, and she nodded. "Nope! How'd you know?"

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Erin smiled, like she was a little embarrassed. "Just a guess. I don't like showing my face when I post videos either."

"You post videos too?" the girl asked, genuinely surprised. "What kind?"

"I like painting," Erin said honestly. "Sometimes, if I'm in the mood, I post my work online."

She had never actually seen T's account, but if Jane liked her, it had to be because of her art. So, keeping things vague was perfect.

Sure enough, someone nearby blurted, "Wait, you're not T, are you?"

A few people who knew Erin looked over, and one said, "Erin, I heard my friend say you started doing online stuff after graduation. This could be it."

“Totally! Wow, Erin, you’ve barely graduated, and you’ve already caught Ms. Nicholls’s attention with just a random online account? That’s amazing.”

“I’ve always thought Erin had serious talent,” someone gushed. “Remember that graduation piece she painted? The school’s art gallery snatched it up before the ceremony even happened.”

“Yeah, she never placed lower than third in every competition she entered back in school. With talent like that, no wonder Ms. Nicholls noticed her.”

The compliments poured in, and the small circle around Erin tightened even more.

Erin gave an embarrassed smile. “Oh, come on, it’s nothing. I just paint for fun.

“I’ve always admired Ms. Nicholls. If she really likes my work, that’s an honor for me.

“I only started doing social media as a hobby. I never even showed my face... didn’t think people would figure me out like this.”

“Gosh, you are making me blush”

She never once outright said she was “T,” but every word she dropped made it sound exactly

like that was the case.

The group grew even more excited, each of them thinking they might get a chance to meet Jane through Erin. In the shuffle, the girl who had originally brought up “T” got pushed to the

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edge of the crowd.

Not that she seemed to mind. Her eyes sparkled as she looked at Erin.

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She could not believe her luck. She had actually found the person Jane was looking for!

She had to tell her aunt right away.

Meanwhile, Erin stayed in the middle of the attention, basking in it. She might not have been the actual guest of honor tonight, but she was still the one everyone was fawning over.

On the outside, she stayed humble, acting all shy under the praise. Yet, that smug satisfaction in her eyes was impossible to miss.

Technically, she was not lying. She was doing social media, and she posted her paintings online without showing her face.

Yet, that was all part of the brand she'd been building—dripping hints of both artistic talent and wealthy upbringing early on, then revealing her face later, topping it off with a few carefully crafted hashtags, and boom, instant buzz.

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She had not even made her first move yet, and the universe had already dropped a gift in her lap.

Guess luck really did favor her.

Erin accepted the compliments with perfect ease, acting like she truly had a close relationship with Jane.

The more people saw her like that, the more convinced they were that she was “T.” After all, who would dare fake something like that?

With no one doubting her, the praise only got more outrageous. Before long, people were saying Jane might even take Erin as her last apprentice.

“I knew Erin was destined for big things. Remember that peacock painting she casually did in her sophomore year? Not only did she use it as her graduation piece, but the school snatched it up for their collection right away.”

“I’ve seen it in person. It’s so full of sorrow you can feel the peacock’s grief just looking at it. No wonder someone tried to plagiarize it back then.”

“Speaking of which, doesn’t that person look a lot like Tracy?”

Every head turned toward the door. There was Tracy, walking in wearing a simple, modest dress.

She scanned the room, and sure enough, her eyes landed on Erin—surrounded, glowing under all that attention—and on the hostile stares aimed at her.

Tracy frowned. She did not have to guess twice to know they were unfriendly toward her.

And right on cue, a few people broke from the group and came straight for her.

“This is Ms. Nicholls’s birthday party. What are you doing here?” One girl—who had been flattering Erin the most—jumped in first.

Tracy recognized their faces, but she had never been close to them.

If they were coming at her like this, it was almost certainly because of Erin.

She had no idea why Erin had set her sights on her the moment she arrived, but she was not looking *to* cause a scene.

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Even though her main focus was to get Erin’s DNA, this was Jane’s birthday party, after all—the one artist she truly respected.

She did not want to turn it into a spectacle.

So instead of rising to the bait, she kept her voice calm. “Do you need something?”

That only made the girl angrier, like she had swung a punch and hit air. “I’m asking you a question. Why are you here?”

“This is an invite-only event,” another chimed in. “How did you sneak in?”

The circle tightened. “Exactly! This party isn’t for just anyone. Especially not a shameless plagiarist like you. How dare

you show up here?”

“If I were you, I’d keep my head down for the rest of my life. And yet here you are, waltzing around in a gown like you belong.”

Tracy did not want to waste her energy on them.

They were just like the Jackmans—mindless whenever Erin was involved, ready to be her attack dogs.

However, she knew if she did not clear things up, they would not let her go.

“I walked right in through the front door,” she said evenly. “If you really want to know why I’m here, ask the security at the entrance. If they tell you I snuck in, feel free to have them throw

me out.”

Her tone was open, but her face was unreadable. It was enough to make even the most confident accusers falter.

That was when Erin finally stepped in, smiling sweetly at her. “Don’t be mad, Tracy. Everyone just can’t stand plagiarists, that’s all. They weren’t trying to single you out.”

“Plagiarists are awful,” Tracy said with a faint smile. “Whoever’s done it will get what’s coming to them sooner *or* later. Don’t you think?”

Erin caught the meaning behind her words but did not care,

In everyone else’s eyes, that peacock painting was hers. What could Tracy possibly do about it

now?

She had tried before, and no one believed her.

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Tilting her chin slightly, Erin replied, “Tracy, I forgave you for that incident years ago. You don’t need to curse yourself just to get people on your side.

“If this were another occasion, I might even ask the organizers to let you stay, for old times” sake. But this is Ms. Nicholls’s birthday.

“She’s my idol. So, I can’t just stand by and watch you cause a scene here.”

Seeing how “gracious” Erin was being, the people around her jumped to defend her. “Erin, you’re too softhearted, so that’s why people take advantage of you. If it were me, I’d ruin that plagiarist’s career completely.”

“Exactly! She’s already been proven to be a plagiarist, and she still dares to show Shameless.”

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Erin felt smug inside, but on the outside, she put on this warm, understanding smile as she walked over to Tracy. “Tracy, why don’t you just head home? I promise I’ll keep your secret. I won’t tell Ms. Nicholls you snuck in.”

She reached out to take Tracy’s hand, but Tracy stepped back, clearly on guard.

Their little exchange had already drawn attention, and people started drifting over to see what was going on.

Tracy did not want to make a big scene—partly because she did not want to ruin Jane’s birthday, and partly because she needed to quietly get Erin’s DNA tonight.

After a moment of thought, she pulled an invitation from her small bag. “If you really think I sneaked in, you can check for yourself.”

Erin was not surprised. She knew Tracy was not the type to crash someone’s party.

However, since all the invitations looked the same, Erin could still claim Tracy stole it—something she had done before without batting an eye.

Grinning, Erin opened the card, but her smile froze as soon as she saw the details.

It had the same time and location as all the others, but there was an extra touch—a bold capital “T” next to the guest’s name.

And beneath it, Jane’s own signature.



Tracy is “T“?

Was she *personally invited* by Ms. Nicholls?

Even Erin’s acting skills could not hide the flicker of shock on her face.

People behind her, not knowing what was going on, craned their necks to look. “I wanna see that invite ...”

Before the words were out, Erin snapped the card shut and instinctively hid it behind her back.

“It’s real. I saw it. Guess we misunderstood Tracy,” she said in a sweet, apologetic tone. “You’re not mad at us, right?”

Tracy did not bother with the niceties. She just held out her hand. “Give it back.”

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Of course, Erin did not. Her eyes even started to water.

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“So you’re not gonna forgive **us**? We didn’t mean to hurt you. It’s just ... after what happened before, people misunderstood. If you’re mad, I’ll apologize for everyone. You can yell at me or even hit me if you like.”

She stood there looking like she was willing to take all the blame just *to* protect the others, her tears trembling on her lashes, making her look heartbreakingly pitiful.

Some people had started to feel guilty about the misunderstanding, but the moment they saw Erin like this, that guilt vanished. They stepped in front of her protectively. “Erin already said sorry. Why are you still making a big deal out of it?”

“It was a misunderstanding. You’re just picking on her ‘cause she’s nice, aren’t you?”

“Today is Ms. Nicholls’s birthday. You’re not making all this noise just to get his attention, are you?”

Tracy stayed calm, as if none of their accusations touched her.

She had seen this kind of thing plenty of times since Erin returned to the Jackmans.

The difference was that the Jackmans at least had some blood connection with Erin and had known Tracy for years. Yet, these people were complete strangers. So, why were they so eager to take Erin's side?

It was like the moment Erin stood there, everyone automatically lined up to protect her.

Very strange.

Tracy studied Erin from behind the human wall, her gaze sharp enough to make Erin's stomach twist. For a moment, it felt like Tracy could see straight through her.

Then, Tracy looked away and turned her attention to the group blocking her.

"I just asked for my invitation back, but you're saying I'm bullying her. Yet, you accused me of sneaking in and basically ganged up on me. Doesn't that count as bullying, too?"

They knew she had a point, but none of them would admit it.

"You're making stuff up!" one of them blurted, sounding more nervous than convincing.

Seeing no one speak up, Erin, still hiding pitifully behind the others, clenched her teeth.

*Useless idiots!*

Chapter 246 Tracy Is "T"?

She tightened her grip on the invitation. There was no way she was giving it back.

Just as she was deciding what to do next, a stir went through the crowd.

A woman in her late forties slowly came down the spiral staircase.

She was not wearing a fancy gown—just a flowing bohemian outfit that made her look effortlessly stylish—yet she still carried an air of elegance that demanded attention.

"It's Ms. Nicholls!" someone whispered.

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Almost immediately, people began moving toward her, even the ones who had been blocking Tracy's path.

Chapter 247 Broken Jewelry

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Erin glanced around, then quickly followed the crowd, smoothly slipping the invitation in her hand out of sight.

Watching the others deliberately act like they just happened to be avoiding her, Tracy was not angry—she just found it funny.

She did not plan on making a scene at an event like this, so she let them go without saying anything.

As for the invitation Erin had taken, it was useless to her anyway, so she did not bother trying to get it back.

What Tracy did not know was that at that moment, Erin was gripping the invitation inside her bag, her eyes full of cold determination.

No matter who “T” was before, from now on, it would only be her.

And Tracy?

She would make sure that Tracy would always be an embarrassing clown in Jane’s eyes.

After being stuck in Angelic Etiquette Academy for two years, Tracy was totally out of the loop. She had kept a low profile today, so hardly anyone noticed her.

That made it easier for her to keep an eye on Erin, looking for a chance to quietly get her

DNA.

However, no matter where Erin went, she had a crowd around her. Even Jane seemed to give her special attention, standing beside her and talking for quite a while.

Because of that, even more people flocked to Erin’s side.

Just as Tracy was wondering how to make a move, Erin suddenly slipped away from the group and started walking straight toward her.

It was the perfect chance, but Erin never approached anyone without a reason. Tracy knew she must have something planned.

She did not back away, but she did stay on guard.

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Her spot was in the corner of the hall, with a small balcony around the corner that almost nobody visited.

Erin stopped a few steps away, holding a one-meter-long gift box in her hands.

“Since you’re here for Ms. Nicholls’s birthday party, you must’ve brought a gift, right?”

Of course, Tracy had. No one came to an event like this empty-handed.

However, at a party this size, guests would not carry their gifts around. So, the staff would take them at the entrance, log them, and store them away.

Tracy’s gift had been handed over long ago, and Erin definitely knew that. So walking over here just to ask was obviously suspicious.

Tracy narrowed her eyes. “What do  
you want?”

Erin gave a smug, almost creepy smile. “I know you gave Ms. Nicholls the newest set of paints. Sure, the colors are all there, but compared to my gift, they’re nothing.

“So you must be jealous. So jealous that you couldn’t help but do something crazy.”

As she spoke, she slowly opened the gift box, revealing a set of sparkling, delicate jewelry.

Tracy had grown up surrounded by luxury, so she recognized instantly that the set was expensive.

However, the pieces inside looked intentionally damaged—scattered and messy, with none of their original elegance.

Tracy’s stomach tightened. She already guessed what Erin was trying to do when she suddenly heard her scream.

“Tracy! I know you don’t like me, but how could you destroy the gift I was going to give Ms. Nicholls?”

Erin raised her voice, instantly drawing stares from all around, including from Jane herself.

Hearing her name, Jane walked over, a group of people trailing behind her.

They came upon two young women facing each other: one with a blank face, the other red-eyed and full of grievance.

The teary-eyed girl was holding an open box, and inside was a messy pile of broken jewelry.

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To the crowd, it looked like the expressionless girl was bullying the tearful one.

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Jane looked at the scene without a hint of anger for the interruption, her voice calm. “What happened here?”

Erin turned. “Ms. Nicholls?”

Her face lit up with surprise, and then, as if just realizing people had gathered around, she hurriedly tried to hide the box behind her.

However, the box was huge, so there was no way her body could cover it. If anything, the clumsy move only made more people look.

She gave a pitiful and restrained smile. “It’s ... it’s nothing.”

Her words said one thing, but her eyes filled with tears, making her look heartbreakingly wronged.

Jane’s brows tightened almost imperceptibly, her gaze on Erin sharp and questioning, but she did not speak right away.

When no one followed up, Erin’s fake crying started to feel awkward.

She glanced up at Jane and found herself meeting a pair of eyes that looked like they had seen everything life could throw at them.

Her heart gave an involuntary jolt, and she quickly looked away.

“It’s all my fault,” Erin said in her usual manipulative tone. “I didn’t protect the gift I was going to give you, Ms. Nicholls. If anyone’s to blame, blame me—please don’t blame Tracy.”

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Chapter 248 I Won’t Stay Dumb Forever

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“It was my fault for giving Ms. Nicholls such a nice gift, and that made Tracy jealous enough to act out. But honestly, Ms. Nicholls is someone I look up to more than anyone else.

“I spent all my

allowance on this jewelry set and even asked Andrew to hire a famous designer to make it a month ago.

“If Tracy thought my gift outshone hers, she could’ve just told me. Why ruin all the effort I put in? Sob, sob... ”

Erin’s crying slowly shifted into blaming Tracy, her teary face making it seem like Tracy had done something unforgivable.

People started feeling sorry for Erin and shot Tracy dirty looks.

Jane frowned too, clearly annoyed.

Her eyes landed on Tracy, and instantly her opinion of the girl dropped.

Jane seldom came back home, and this was the first big party she’d hosted here. On top of that, she disliked schemers and tricksters, so anyone causing trouble at this party would annoy her.

But when she locked eyes with Tracy, that automatic dislike strangely disappeared.

As an artist, Jane trusted her instincts more than her brain.

After traveling the country for decades and meeting all kinds of people, she could tell from Tracy’s eyes—this girl wasn’t the type to use such cheap tricks.

She had planned *to* brush the whole thing off, but instead, Jane asked Tracy, “Do you have anything to say?”

The fact that Jane gave Tracy a chance to explain caught Erin off guard.

In her plan, everyone was supposed to side against Tracy, not hear her out, and then Tracy would be tossed out.

That was how it always worked before.

Erin didn’t waste time wondering why her plan was failing—she only knew she couldn’t let Tracy talk.

She couldn’t let Jane find out Tracy was the mysterious “T” she was searching for.

Chapter 248 I Won’t Stay Dumb Forever

“T” could only be herself!

So, as Tracy steadied herself, ready to speak, Erin cut her off, “Ms. Nicholls, this is your birthday—we shouldn’t let some silly fight ruin your night.

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“Please think of this gift as something I still owe you. I’ll bring it to you myself later. Don’t be upset at Tracy; I’ll take her away right now.”

She reached for Tracy’s hand, but Tracy dodged with a frown.

Erin’s lips trembled, eyes filling with tears. “Tracy, I know you don’t like me, but this is Ms. Nicholls’ party. Can we talk about this later, please?”

She played it off like she was going out of her way to cover for Tracy, which made people think she was sweet and generous.

Meanwhile, Tracy, who didn’t buy into the act, ended up looking like the one with a mean streak.

As expected, more people began glaring at Tracy like she was the villain.

But Tracy, either used to these looks or simply not caring, ignored them.

Instead, she turned to Jane with a calm face and said with real sincerity, “Ms. Nicholls, even though I didn’t mean for this to happen, I’m sorry for messing up your birthday.”

She gave a respectful nod.

Tracy knew Erin was up to no good, but dragging things out would only ruin the party more— and Tracy had her own goals to focus on. So she decided to use the chance Erin had accidentally handed her.

Jane, picking up on something, studied Tracy more closely,

There was a strength in this girl that most people didn't have.

After apologizing to Jane, Tracy turned a cold stare on Erin.

Erin, startled by the look, stumbled back.

It felt like Tracy had changed into someone dangerous, like a bomb about to go off.

And maybe seeing that fear in Erin's eyes, Tracy suddenly stepped forward and grabbed her

hair.

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"Erin, maybe I was dumb enough to fall for your tricks before. But don't think I'll stay dumb forever."

"If I wanted to deal with you, I wouldn't use cheap little games. I'd do it like this."

She raised her other hand and slapped Erin across the face without hesitation.

"Smack! Smack! Smack!"

The sharp sound of three slaps echoed through the room, making the crowd flinch as if they'd been hit themselves.

Chapter 249 Call The Police

At this kind of birthday party, people care a lot about their image. Getting **into** a shouting match was already bad enough—throwing hands? Totally unthinkable.

That's why Tracy's behavior seemed absolutely wild.



Everyone froze, too scared to step in. They just watched as Erin got slapped, her cheeks puffing up almost instantly.

Tracy looked annoyed, shoved her aside, and Erin stumbled before hitting the floor with a loud thud.

In a spot where nobody noticed, Tracy secretly pinched a few strands of Erin's hair between her fingers.

Her voice turned sharp and threatening as she looked down at her. "If I wanted to deal with you, this is exactly how I'd do it."

Erin was stunned.

The Tracy she remembered was a shy, weak girl at home—someone who hardly even spoke up. When had she turned into this straight-up maniac?

The whole room went dead silent.

After what felt like forever, Erin finally stammered, "I—I'm sorry, it was all my fault. I misunderstood Tracy."

She covered her face and started crying loudly. "Tracy didn't break my gift out of jealousy. It broke by itself. It wasn't her fault. Tracy was right to hit me ... I—I deserved it ... Sob ... \*

Her expression, showing that she had been wronged but holding back her anger out of fear of getting hit again, made her look pitiful to everyone watching.

Jane frowned, realizing something was off. Erin's words still hinted that Tracy had ruined her gift.

Anyone would be irritated if their birthday turned into this much drama, and Jane's voice turned cold. "You claim she broke your stuff—do you have any evidence?"

Erin lifted her teary eyes toward Jane, almost begging for sympathy.

"I—I don't know," she whispered helplessly. "I don't usually have enemies, and my family and

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friends all love me—except for Tracy.”

She shot a nervous look at Tracy. “Back at my birthday party, all my gifts got ruined, so I thought it was her.”

The truth was, Winona had destroyed those gifts, but the incident got buried. Hardly anyone knew.

So now, with Erin twisting the story, people started assuming Tracy had done it.

She had already ruined all the gifts at someone else’s birthday before, so with that record, it wasn’t surprising she might do it again.

Maybe she was behind today’s mess, too. Only this time she was smart enough not to leave any clues.

Nobody spoke, but their smirks and side—eyes toward Tracy said it all.

Only Jane kept her calm. Her deep gaze stayed steady as she asked, “Do you have anything to say?”

She trusted her gut, and it told her Tracy deserved a fair chance.

Tracy could feel Jane’s fairness and looked at her with respect—and a little guilt.

“I didn’t break anything, and I had no reason to cause trouble at your birthday,” Tracy said sincerely. “If you’re okay with it, please call the police.”

Let the professionals figure it out.

Tracy was curious *to* see how Erin would wriggle out of things once the cops showed up.

Erin froze, panic flickering in her eyes.

She had made this plan up on the spot, just assuming things would go her way like before. She hadn’t counted on Tracy flipping the script, and she wasn’t ready for real questions.

Her eyes dropped, fists tightening as she scrambled for an escape plan.

What she didn’t realize was that Jane happened to catch every bit of that expression.

The truth was, Jane genuinely admired “T” for her natural talent and spark.

Over the years, Jane had traveled all over and met plenty of gifted people—some even more

talented than T.

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But the mix of struggle, depth, and sharp contrasts hidden in T's artwork stood out as some of the most powerful she'd ever come across.

Even in T's darkest paintings, there was always a flicker of light, a soul that stayed pure. Jane never thought she'd meet T in a moment like this.

Feeling regret for such wasted talent, Jane didn't rush to agree with Tracy's request. She hesitated.

Tracy noticed the pause.

She didn't know why Erin had gotten on Jane's good side, but she respected Jane—it was her birthday, after all. Tracy decided not to push her.

Besides, she had already accomplished her other goal for the day, so there was no need to stick around and make things awkward for Jane..

But just as Tracy opened her mouth to speak, another voice cut in, "Actually, there's no need to call the police. I know what really happened."

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Everyone turned toward the sound and saw a girl with a round, cute face stepping out from the back balcony.

This was the same girl who had been whispering to the crowd that Ms. Nicholls was looking

for “T.”

Without saying anything extra, she pointed at Erin, who was still on the floor. “I saw her myself. She came to Tracy with a box, speaking weird words and laughing like she had won something.

“Then she opened the box herself. The jewelry inside was already broken, but she yelled about it, trying to make Tracy look guilty.”

Erin had never expected anyone to be hiding up on that dark balcony. She completely lost control of her emotions. Her face twisted with shock and anger.

True to her habit of acting, she quickly pulled herself together and started crying loudly.

“I don’t even know you! Why are you accusing me like this?”

Then she turned on Tracy, “I can’t believe Tracy even brought a witness. Why won’t you leave me alone?”

Before Tracy could answer, the girl laughed out loud. “You’re saying she paid me to lie about you?”

Erin continued sniffing, “Everyone in Cloudville knows Tracy dislikes me. If this makes Tracy happy, then I’ll just suffer a little.”

She didn’t answer the girl directly, but the meaning was clear.

If it were someone else, they might have yelled or cursed in anger. But the girl just froze for a moment—and then started laughing.

“Hahaha!” She laughed so hard she almost couldn’t stand straight.

While laughing, she walked over to Jane.

Everyone stared in shock and confusion **as** she suddenly grabbed Jane’s arm.

Jane smiled warmly and didn’t pull away.

Chapter 250 Misjudge

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Looking at Erin, the girl said cheerfully, “So you’re saying that at my own carefully planned two-month party, I somehow got bribed by a stranger to accuse you, someone I don’t even know, and destroy my aunt’s birthday gift?”

Erin was completely frozen. “You  
you are...

“Everyone, meet my niece, Sylvia Nicholls,” Jane said formally, her eyes full of love for the girl.

Everyone gasped. No one expected such a quiet guest to turn out to be a key player in today’s drama.

Erin was stunned. Her face went pale.

She had been using the same old tricks and never imagined they would fail so badly.

Feeling everyone’s eyes on her, Erin couldn’t handle it—her eyes rolled back, and she collapsed right there.

This wasn’t acting.

After years of always winning, this was the first time Erin had been completely defeated—and it literally knocked her out.

With the main troublemaker down, even though people were itching for more drama, there was no way to keep the show going.

Everyone knew when to let things slide, so they brushed it off quickly, and the party picked right back up with its lively vibe.

As for Erin, the hotel staff carried her out and thoughtfully called an ambulance.

Jane, arm in arm with her niece Sylvia, kept chatting with friends, looking completely unbothered.

But once they were back in the lounge, the moment Erin’s name came up, both of their expressions turned complicated.

“I really didn’t expect T to be like this. Did I misjudge her?”

Jane’s face showed disappointment and a little regret.

She took out her phone and stared at T’s account and artworks.

No matter how she looked, the person who made those paintings didn't seem like the same "T" she met today.

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Chapter 250 Misjudge

Sylvia noticed her aunt's disappointment.

To be honest, she felt it too.

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She had hoped for something special from T—not just because of her aunt, but because the paintings reminded her of someone she had once met.

Someone who had appeared suddenly in her life and disappeared before she could even learn their name, someone she had considered a close friend.

Thinking of that person made Sylvia a little sad, but she quickly shook it off.

She leaned closer to Jane and took her arm affectionately. "If you don't like what you see, just ignore them. There are plenty of talented people who don't have good hearts. Consider it bad luck

you ran into one."

Jane had always adored her charming, sweet niece, and seeing her try to comfort her in that playful, caring way lifted a lot of her gloom.