

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

## **#Left Behind 261 - Read The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late Left Behind 261**

Chapter 261 Her Confusion

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Matthew kept his thoughts in check, nodding with a gentle smile. "Yes, I don't like her. In my eyes, she doesn't even come close to you."

Erin knew he was flattering her, but she still liked hearing it.

No matter what had happened between Matthew and Tracy, as long as he wasn't obsessed with Tracy and stopped being her loyal simp, that was enough for Erin.

She intended to make sure Tracy lost everything.

Erin's smile grew as she lifted the cup of tea Matthew had poured. Her intentions were clear.

Both of them kept smiling, each hiding their real thoughts. But neither noticed that someone outside the glass window had seen them clinking cups together.

Tracy hadn't expected that just by stepping out casually, she would see those two together.

She was too far away to hear their conversation, but it made her think about the time she'd met Matthew at the hospital.

She'd assumed Erin had approached him to compete with her. But she hadn't contacted Matthew for a long time. Why would Erin still be so close to him?

From what Tracy knew, Erin wouldn't spend effort on Matthew unless there was something to gain.

Determined to confirm her suspicions, Tracy arranged to meet Matthew the next day.

Getting him to meet her wasn't hard, especially since he had recently tried to take 3% of Jackman Enterprise shares from her.

She acted friendly, pretending she wanted a spot in Jackman Enterprise and was counting on his help.

Matthew kept his calm, gentle smile. "How could I be harsh to a beauty like you, Ms. Yarwood?"

"Don't worry, I won't let anyone mess with you."

He promised with conviction, but Tracy knew better than to trust him.

She didn't expose him, though. Instead, she toasted him politely and acted grateful.

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Later, she quietly made sure someone told Erin about her dinner with Matthew.

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Things turned out just as Tracy expected. After probing a few times, she realized that Erin grew uneasy whenever she interacted with Matthew.

It looked like Erin was afraid Tracy might get too close to him.

That left Tracy even more confused.

Erin's closeness to Matthew seemed aimed at competing with Tracy.

But the person Erin truly cared about was Ronald, not Matthew.

Even though Erin had once tried to hook up with Ronald, she had pulled back after being scolded a few times. It was obvious she had given up.

Tracy thought about it but couldn't pinpoint the reason. But there was one thing she was sure of.

Erin's strange behavior had to be connected to the unusual side of her.

Tracy wanted to investigate more, but she knew it wasn't the right time. If she acted hastily, she might alert them, so she arranged for someone to keep an eye on them.

She had more important matters to do.

Even though she had entered Jackman Enterprise successfully, she could still be pushed out at any moment. Her only chance was to excel in her project.

But she couldn't do it alone. Andrew deliberately made things difficult and claimed, "We have a lot of projects. Everyone is busy. No one has time to help you."

He refused to send anyone to assist her.

Tracy had no choice but to hire people externally to keep the project moving, which took up most of her time.

Luckily, her recruits were loyal. Eventually, she could leave Jackman Enterprise to them, and Andrew wouldn't be able to interfere.

Once her team was ready, Tracy led them into the company.

At the entrance, they ran into Simon, who was arrogantly strutting around.

Ever since Tracy "crazily" beat him at Jackman Residence, Simon had been resting at home for

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quite a while.

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Since the Dunns had gained some benefits from the Jackmans, Edmond worried Simon might try to get back at Tracy and stir up trouble. So, he had forced Simon into the company and assigned him work, which kept him out of sight until now.

Tracy hadn't seen Simon in so long that she nearly forgot he existed. When she ran into him at the company entrance, she didn't even recognize him and just walked past without glancing at him.

Simon, who had planned to wear a sneer and mock her, froze completely. He could feel all the scornful stares around him.

"Stop right there!" he yelled angrily.

Tracy acted as if she hadn't heard a word, not even pausing as she walked.

Simon's anger boiled over as he barked at his bodyguard, "Stop her!"

His bodyguard immediately stepped forward, blocking Tracy and her team's path.

The bodyguard was a woman roughly Tracy's height. Though her appearance was plain, the sharpness in her expression gave her a surprisingly commanding presence.

## Chapter 262 Targeting Her

### +5 Free Coins

Tracy barely looked at the female bodyguard and focused on Simon, frowning slightly. "Do

need something?"

you

Simon lifted his chin arrogantly. He intended to step forward. But then, he seemed to remember something and quietly stepped back, keeping a safe distance from Tracy.

He clearly hadn't forgotten the last time she nearly bit a chunk out of him, so he was cautious.

"Tracy, this is the Jackmans' company. How did a bastard like you get in here?"

Tracy had been deputy CEO for a while, and everyone in the company knew it. There was no way Simon didn't know.

His question was just to provoke her.

She didn't bother arguing. "Where I go is none of your business. If you want to interfere, make sure you're ready for the consequences when I lose my temper. You've already seen what happens when I'm pushed too far."

Her tone stayed calm, but her words were a warning.

Simon still hadn't gotten over the last time she went crazy and bit him. Hearing her say that, he swore the old bite mark started throbbing again.

"D—don't you

dare threaten me!" he shouted, ducking behind his female bodyguard. "I've got a bodyguard now. She's one of the best from my company. Even if you snap, I'm not afraid!"

As the only son of a rich family, Simon had started a security company just for fun. Now that it was doing well, he loved showing it off to his rich friends.

Tracy ignored his show of bravado and stepped around them, walking away.

Simon stood frozen, completely brushed aside, as if she'd slapped him in public.

**He** clenched his teeth and glared at her back. "Just wait, bitch!"

Tracy didn't take Simon seriously. But after today's incident, he resented her even more.

**He** looked for a chance to teach her a lesson. And luckily for him, he soon found one.

Although most of Tracy's project team were newcomers, they were highly capable..

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After working together for a while, they started making rapid progress. But one part of the project needed approval from Simon's department.

As the department head, Simon could easily block it with a single word. Tracy's team went to him several times, but he kept making excuses to avoid approving the project.

The most ridiculous reason he gave was that he was in a bad mood from staying up late playing games the night before, so he wasn't in the mood to approve anything.

It was obvious he was targeting Tracy personally.

Most of her team members were young and hot-headed, and they angrily confronted Simon.

Simon didn't flinch. He admitted he was deliberately being difficult and told everyone around, "Want my approval? Fine! Have your deputy CEO serve me and apologize first. Then maybe I'll think about it."

When Tracy heard that, she wasn't angry. She had expected that.

From the moment she learned Simon would handle the approval, she knew he'd cause trouble and had already prepared a plan.

Edmond had once been the company's only deputy CEO, which had allowed Simon to grow

arrogant.

His behavior never reached higher-ups because Edmond had surrounded him with loyal supporters, and Erin always defended him.

Otherwise, with Andrew's personality, he would never have tolerated such a useless parasite in the company.

Understanding all that, Tracy ignored Simon's provocations and went straight to Andrew to report the situation.

Having known him since childhood, she knew how much Andrew cared about the company, so she thought he would take action.

To her surprise, Andrew didn't even glance at the papers. He said, "This is your problem to handle. Don't drag me into it.

"If everyone brought me their issues, I'd spend my whole day cleaning up messes."

At that moment, everything clicked for Tracy.

Andrew cared about profits, but her project wasn't one of them. That explained why he had

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never supported her.

Simon's obstruction might even have had Andrew's approval.

Once she realized it, Tracy couldn't help but laugh.

Andrew frowned, obviously annoyed by her reaction. "What's so funny?"

Tracy just looked at him, said nothing, and walked away.

Her impolite attitude angered him more, but the feeling didn't last.

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With skills that poor, Tracy still had the nerve to stir up trouble at the company. Andrew wondered where she got such confidence.

He quickly pushed the thought aside, thinking it wouldn't be long before Tracy left the company dejectedly. Maybe she'd even hand over her shares voluntarily.

But to his surprise, Tracy showed up in his office the next day with a pile of documents.

"Mr. Andrew, I know you're busy, so I'll be brief. Everything for this project is ready, and we're just waiting for Simon's approval.

"If you're not interested, I can take my team and start fresh elsewhere.

"I own 20% of Jackman Enterprise, and I'm sure there are plenty of investors who'd back this project."

With someone like Andrew, it was better to focus on the benefits rather than waste time talking.

Showing him the real value of the project was the only way to get his attention.

Just as she expected, Andrew, who had been indifferent before, straightened up as he went through the

papers.

He finally stopped looking at her with contempt.

When Tracy first pitched the project, all the shareholders approved it. Andrew saw its potential benefits, but he didn't think she could handle it.

He had planned to wait for her to struggle and give up, then he would take over her project.

That way, he could stop her reckless behavior and secure a strong project for the company. It was a win-win situation.

He hadn't expected Tracy to outperform his expectations. She solved the problems he created and ran the project flawlessly.

For the first time, Andrew regarded her with genuine seriousness.

Even before knowing the truth about the real and fake heiress, he had assumed she was a spoiled girl with no real skills.

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He never knew she had this kind of talent.

In reality, she might have had the ideas, but she couldn't have managed everything so perfectly without Ronald's help.

Of course, she had no intention of telling Andrew that.

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After Andrew had reviewed most of the documents, Tracy asked, "Mr. Andrew, what do you think?"

It sounded like a question, but she knew he wouldn't refuse.

As she expected, Andrew agreed, but he had a condition. "I can help you deal with Simon and clear the path for your team, but Erin has to join your project."

Tracy didn't see that coming.

Erin's understanding of company matters was no better than hers, maybe even worse.

Everyone knew they were rivals, and Andrew was clearly trying to make things difficult.

If Tracy had been seeking a position in Jackman Enterprise or needed the project as leverage, she would have refused.

But that wasn't her goal, so she had no reason to say no.

Still, knowing Andrew's suspicious nature, she didn't agree right away. She acted annoyed, brushing him off a few times before finally nodding reluctantly.

With Andrew's help, Simon's approval came through smoothly.

Simon, who had been certain Tracy would beg him for help, was furious. All his tough talk had backfired, making him feel humiliated.

He wasn't going to let it go. If he couldn't win openly, he'd try to play dirty.

After days of waiting, Simon and his men finally caught Tracy working late alone.



When she entered the underground parking lot to leave, Simon led his group to charge at her.

Tracy was startled at first. Despite her wary expression, she wasn't truly worried.

Ever since Tracy had been kidnapped by the Angelic Etiquette Academy's people, Ronald had made sure she had extra protection.

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While that team might not be enough to fight off the academy's people, they were more than capable of handling Simon and his crew.

Simon didn't know any of that. Seeing her alone and seemingly surrounded, he felt invincible, forgetting completely how she had once knocked him down and beaten him.

When Tracy cautiously asked what he was planning, he laughed arrogantly. "What do you think? We still have unfinished business.

"You're just a fake taking someone else's place. You should've stayed out of my way. Why do you keep coming after me? Now it's time you pay!"

He signaled to his men. "Grab this bitch and make her apologize to me!"

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Chapter 264 Ivy

Those men closed in on Tracy.

"Stop!"

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+10 Free Coins

Suddenly, a group appeared, forming a shield around her. There were even more of them than Simon's men.

The sudden turn of events threw the previously arrogant Simon off guard. He instantly turned pale.

Trying to stay composed, he said, "Who are you? I'm from Jackman Enterprise, and my dad is the deputy CEO. This isn't your business!"

Tracy sneered at his bluff, not bothering to argue.

Already drained from overtime and clueless about running the company, she didn't want to waste energy on him. She simply told her bodyguards, "Take him down, but don't kill him."

She knew fear was the only way to make Simon think twice about bothering her again.

Simon, once so confident, now looked strangled with panic. His face flushed.

"D—don't come any closer!" he stammered, retreating while pushing his bodyguards ahead. "Stop them all!"

Simon had brought his top bodyguards from his security company, but they were no match for Ronald's team.

Soon, all his men were down, leaving only one female bodyguard holding them off alone.

She was badly hurt and seemed on the verge of collapse, yet she continued protecting Simon.

Tracy couldn't help but stare at that female bodyguard.

Miraculously, she saw a reflection of herself in this woman.

Back at Angelic Etiquette Academy, she had also fought against all odds with her friends, barely holding on with a thread of determination.

After thinking for a moment, Tracy said, "Stop."

The other bodyguards were just doing their job for money. **Her** target **was** Simon. **There** was

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no need to make things harder for the rest of them.

At her command, the fighting stopped.

+10 Free Coins

She didn't press further, only giving Simon a cold warning. "I won't be so nice next time."

Then, she left with her team.

Simon breathed a sigh of relief and immediately dropped his frightened act. He patted the female bodyguard's shoulder enthusiastically.

"Ivy, that was amazing! You're by far the best bodyguard in our company. Better than Yvonne

ever was!

"Don't worry. You'll get a far better deal than she did."

Tracy was about to leave, but she stopped and turned around sharply at the names.

*Ivy? Yvonne?*

Seeing Tracy approach quickly, Simon, who had just started to relax, went pale and ducked behind Ivy.

"W-what do you want now?" he stammered.

Tracy ignored him and turned to Ivy. "Do you know Yvonne? Was she an orphan? Did the security company sell her to a client five years ago?"

Ivy froze. For the first time, her calm expression wavered, and a flicker of surprise crossed her

eyes.

Simon, however, got pissed and snapped, "What are you talking about? It was just normal employment!"

"And how do you know Yvonne?"

He even forgot his fear of Tracy, stepping in front of Ivy to confront her angrily.

Tracy frowned, irritation flashing in her eyes. She told her team, "Pull him back!"

As her men moved to seize Simon, Ivy immediately shielded him again.

She watched Tracy warily, her expression returning to its usual composure. "I do know Yvonne, but that was five years ago.

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"I'm where I am today because of my effort and Mr. Dunn's support. If you came here for her, tell her I owe her nothing."

She sounded cold and looked annoyed, as if she wanted to sever all ties with Yvonne.

Tracy was stunned by the response.

Before Yvonne died, her deepest regret wasn't her failed revenge, but that she never saw the girl she rescued from the orphanage once more.

She had thought Ivy and Yvonne cared for each other, but that wasn't the case.

Tracy stared at Ivy for a long moment, but she found no emotion behind that indifferent face.

Her heart sank. Unsure whether it was anger or disappointment, she turned and left without saying another word.

Ivy stayed still, watching Tracy go, yet something subtle flickered in her gaze.

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Chapter 265 Something Is Wrong

Ivy turned her head and saw Simon staring at her, as if trying to read her thoughts.

She met his gaze calmly, silent and unshaken.

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+10 Free Coins

After a long pause, Simon finally said, "Yvonne has been missing for five years, and now there's news. Aren't you curious?"

Ivy seemed ready for the question and shook her head. "If she had shown up two years ago, maybe I would've cared, but not now.

"I'm grateful for the generous salary and the power to manage staff. I'm no longer the orphan who needed her to survive."

Simon looked pleased but pressed further. "But you treated her like a sister before. If she hadn't rescued you from the snow back then, you would've frozen to death. She took care of you all those years at the orphanage.

"Even after it closed, she brought you with her and raised you. Can you truly be so heartless?"

Mentioning the past briefly flickered emotion across Ivy's cold face, but it soon grew firm again.

"I owe her, but now I have to look out for myself. I believe she would want me to be well. If I get the chance, I'll repay her."

Her words were sincere but distant and cold.

However, Simon seemed even more satisfied.

"Good! That's exactly why I hold you in such high regard!" He patted her shoulder. "Don't worry. As long as you're loyal to me, I'll never treat you unfairly."

Ivy lowered her head, her tone sincere. "Thank you, Mr. Dunn."

But beneath her bowed head, her eyes held coldness and resentment.

Meanwhile, after leaving, Tracy felt a heavy weight in her chest.

In her memory, Yvonne had always been passionate and straightforward.

Her company's betrayal and the client who sent her to the Angelic Etiquette Academy had fueled her desire for revenge,

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+10 Free Coins

But in the end, the only thing she truly cared about was Ivy, the girl she had personally raised.

Yet, Ivy's reaction made Tracy feel she was completely undeserving of Yvonne's affection.

Tracy was angry. But once her anger faded, she sensed something was wrong.

After thinking it over, she decided to have someone look into Ivy's situation.

After all, Ivy had mattered deeply to Yvonne. Tracy couldn't judge based on a single encounter.

While waiting for the results, Tracy focused on the project.

With Andrew's approval, it moved forward quickly, free from outside interference.

But with Erin now on the team, problems began piling up.

Tracy's appointment as deputy CEO at Jackman Enterprise had caused a stir, and almost everyone in Cloudville's elite circles knew about it.

Whether from envy or genuine interest, the project drew many eyes.

Tracy was aware of that. But instead of being discreet, she chose to be bold and noticeable, almost inviting attention.

Everyone thought she was just new and eager to impress as the deputy CEO, which made her act so flashy.

No one believed that Tracy, who appeared clueless, could successfully manage such an important project without Andrew's help. They were all waiting for her to fail.

When they learned that Erin had joined the project team, even more people started watching. Andrew also kept an eye on them, worried Tracy might be strict with Erin.

Under such circumstances, Erin arrived at work on time every day, always in a cheerful mood.

She wasn't foolish enough to give up her wealthy heiress lifestyle just to work in an office. Her real goal was to target Tracy,

She took pleasure in anything that caused Tracy trouble.

There was another reason Erin felt so upbeat.

Since Tom disappeared, she had been tense for a month, worried that damaging rumors about her might surface.

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But a month had passed, and though Tom was still missing, no rumors had appeared.

It seemed his threat about something being revealed after a month was just a bluff.

With the threat gone, Erin naturally felt relieved and happy.

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Her good mood fueled her energy as she focused on the task Andrew had assigned—creating problems for Tracy’s team.

Erin had always wanted a chance to confront Tracy, ideally forcing her to beg so Erin could control the situation.

So, she grabbed the chance Andrew gave her.

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## Chapter 266 Her Weird Behaviors

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## Chapter 266 Her Weird Behaviors

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Every day at work, Erin would mess up data, miss client meetings, misplace decimals in documents, or even “accidentally” delete files her coworkers had carefully prepared.

After each blunder, she would glance at Tracy, as if waiting for her reaction.

Strangely, Tracy stayed calm, watching Erin like someone watching a clown perform.

In truth, Tracy found Erin laughable.

She knew Erin was acting on purpose with Andrew’s support, but it didn’t bother her. In fact, she was quite glad to see it happen.

She wanted the situation to escalate, drawing attention to herself so Ronald's plans could move forward more smoothly.

But Tracy also had another concern.

Erin's so-called "mistakes" might seem small, yet they were enough to irritate her coworkers.

Oddly, those same coworkers would forgive Erin after she apologized with a tearful look.

It wasn't because she was the heiress of Jackmans. They genuinely believed her apology was sincere and felt they shouldn't blame her further.

For any worker, nothing was more frustrating than dealing with an incompetent teammate.

Even the most patient person would grow tired of constantly fixing someone else's errors.

Yet Erin could smooth things over effortlessly just by saying sorry with teary eyes. That was weird.

To avoid alerting anyone, Tracy did nothing, only observing everyone's reactions closely.

Unexpectedly, her observation revealed something.

Erin seemed fine, but several of Tracy's recruits were sneaking glances at her phone.

Those were people who had recently grown close to Erin.

Tracy found it odd and wanted to know what Erin planned to do with her phone. She deliberately created opportunities for them.

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But every time Erin got the phone, she simply returned it untouched.

Though strange, Tracy had no solid proof and decided to wait.

Through more interactions, Tracy noticed Erin's other small actions.

Besides making "mistakes" daily, Erin frequently contacted Matthew.



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Several times, Tracy secretly followed them and saw them meeting for meals and shopping. Anyone unaware would think they were a couple in love.

Recently, Erin spent more time with Matthew than with Norris, even though she and Norris were already engaged, waiting for him to officially inherit the Gills before marrying.

Unsure of Erin's motives, Tracy didn't act. But unexpectedly, Matthew approached her.

"Ms. Yarwood, you've been following us for days. Do you have something *to* say?"

Matthew stopped Tracy after sending Erin away, clearly aware she had been tracking them.

Tracy understood that his interference meant it wasn't merely about revealing her tracking.

Stepping out of her car, she countered, "Mr. Renault, why wait until now to confront me about following you? Have you already decided what you want to discuss?"

Matthew kept his gentle smile. "I like smart people like you. Why can't we be friends?"

"Sending Erin to target me? Is that how friends behave?"

After discovering Erin had snooped on her phone, Tracy checked Erin's device as well.

Erin had been careful, leaving little evidence, but Tracy found chat records with Matthew. She realized his closeness to Erin was meant to target her.

But Tracy had no issue with Matthew. Why was he going after her?

Seeing her confusion, Matthew's smile faded. "I just want a friendship where we can share secrets freely."

He suddenly leaned closer. "For example, can you tell me what David told you?"

Both Tracy and Matthew knew about each other's connection to David, but they had never brought it up before.

*Why is Matthew asking now?*

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Tracy immediately understood why Matthew had approached her.

His true target had always been David.

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David had been sent to the Angelic Etiquette Academy by Matthew and had been dead for a long time. Matthew's sudden curiosity was definitely a warning sign.

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Chapter 267 Exchanging Secrets

Tracy was well aware of that.

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She had learned long ago from David what kind of person Matthew was. If it had been before, she wouldn't have admitted that David had told her about him.

But now, with suspicious dealings between Matthew and Erin, she wasn't going to let such an opportunity slip away.

After thinking for a moment, Tracy said, "Secrets should be exchanged. If you're so eager to know what David told me, shouldn't you show some sincerity first?"

"Maybe start with the secrets about Erin—the one I dislike most—who has been spending time with you lately."

Matthew had never hidden his interactions with Erin, so he didn't need to schedule a special time to see her.

Yet she met with him secretly, clearly not wanting others to know about their relationship.

From the start, Erin had plans in mind when she got close to Matthew.

Coincidentally, when Matthew asked her out, she was on a date with Norris.

Norris had been unusually busy recently, making their rare dates precious, which Erin clearly enjoyed.

Usually, she was the one making moves with Matthew. It was the first time he had asked her out, and she certainly didn't want to say no.

Norris was already hers, but chances to get close to Matthew were rare, so Erin made her decision quickly.

"Norris, I just remembered Tracy asked me to prepare a document last night. She needs it this afternoon, so I have to go back now."

Even at such a moment, she couldn't resist throwing a little jab at Tracy.

Knowing Erin had joined Tracy's team, Norris didn't doubt her, though he frowned. "Is it that urgent? Is she deliberately giving you trouble?"

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+10 Free Coins

Erin lowered her gaze, her expression full of grievance. "It's my first time handling company work, so I make small mistakes. Tracy said she wants to train me."

"Train you? She's just giving you a hard time!" Norris snapped. "Ignore her. I'll talk to her."

Erin looked touched but shook her head. "No, it's fine. The more I do, the more I learn."

"I'm under Tracy now. If I do well, maybe she won't give me such a hard time."

Although Norris disagreed, he could never refuse her. After a few sweet words, he agreed and let her go.

Before the car disappeared, his phone suddenly rang.

It was an unknown number, but the voice on the line was Tracy's.

As soon as the call connected, she got straight to the point. "Curious about my two years at the Angelic Etiquette Academy? Come to the address I give you. Let's meet and talk."

Tracy knew that even after her scolding, Norris hadn't stopped investigating the Angelic Etiquette Academy, but he hadn't found anything yet.

Even though she didn't know his motive, she still used it to draw him out.

As expected, Norris arrived.

Tracy had come half an hour earlier and sat by a second-floor window with a laptop in front of

her.

Something on the screen made her chuckle softly, a hint of contempt on her face.

Norris frowned and walked over to sit directly across from her. He started accusing her. "Tracy, Erin is helping your team. Why are you making things so hard for her?"

Tracy lifted her eyes, her mocking smile widening. "If you can't speak properly, maybe you should stay quiet."

They had known each other since childhood, but it was only the second time she had snapped at him with cold sarcasm.

Norris felt anger and a small flicker of unease. Something about that didn't feel right.

"You-"

Before he could finish, Tracy pressed a finger to her lips. "Quiet!"

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+10 Free Coins

She didn't want to hear him. Like the Jackmans, he never said anything pleasant anyway.

Without another word, she turned the laptop toward him.

The next moment, Erin's smiling face appeared on the screen.

Norris froze, forgetting what he wanted to say. He asked in confusion, "What does this mean?"

Tracy stayed silent but pointed just below the window.

Following her gesture, Norris saw Erin, who should have been busy with work, sitting across the street at a restaurant with Matthew.

Before Norris could figure out when Erin got so close to Matthew or why she had lied, a familiar voice came from the laptop.

“Matt, the coffee here smells amazing. You should try it.”

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Chapter 268 Just Friends?

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With an innocent smile, Erin passed the coffee she had been drinking, a little foam lingering on her lips. She looked up at him with wide, innocent eyes, clearly waiting for him to take a sip.

As her fiancé, Norris had seen this expression countless times before, but it was always directed *at* him.

He instinctively frowned, an uneasy feeling twisting in his chest.

Still, trusting Erin completely, he pushed the thought aside and kept watching the screen.

Across from her, Matthew’s calm, gentlemanly smile didn’t waver, as if he were used to Erin’s playful demeanor.

He casually adjusted his collar so the button was pointed toward her, then said smoothly, “I’m not a fan of coffee.

“But seeing you now ... even without drinking it, I feel like it would be my favorite.”

His teasing words made Erin blush. She set down the cup and gave him a playful glare.

His laughter grew more cheerful. “Ms. Jackman, you’ve asked me out for meals and shopping so many times. Don’t you have something to say?”

Erin blinked innocently. “I just see you as my best friend. Isn’t it normal for friends to eat and shop together?”

“Just friends?” Matthew raised an eyebrow. “I thought you were dropping hints. Do you have feelings for me?”

Norris' hand jerked, spilling the coffee. His face darkened.

He knew the Jackmans had survived crises because of Matthew, and that Matthew's help was tied to Erin. But he hadn't expected Matthew to take an interest in her!

He stood abruptly. “Erin is a good girl. She shouldn't be spending time with someone like Matthew!”

He started to move, clearly intending to rush over and pull Erin away.

Tracy cut in and said, “Before you rush to be the hero, maybe look at these first.”

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Chapter 268 Just Friends?

She took out a stack of photos.

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Each photo showed Erin and Matthew dining or shopping together. There was nothing overtly intimate, but they stood very close.

They shared sweet smiles and gentle glances, like two people drawn to each other even if they weren't officially a couple.

Norris turned pale, gripping the photos so tightly they almost crumpled.

Tracy said casually, “Aren't you curious how your perfect girl would answer Matthew's question?”

Norris didn't answer, but he didn't leave either. Instead, he looked back at the screen.

There was that familiar face again, wearing the shy, sweet expression he knew so well.

Erin stammered, blushing, “W—what are you talking about? I'm engaged.”

Matthew's calm tone didn't waver. “You're not married yet. Don't you have feelings for me? Do you hate me? If you say yes, it would truly break my heart.”

He sighed, showing a heartbroken expression.

Given his charm and the refined gentleman charisma he'd built over the years, it was hard not *to* feel sorry for him.

Erin felt it too.

*No wonder he's the most devoted, lovesick second lead*

*—just one look from him makes anyone feel for him.*

*Too bad a second lead can only be a loyal, lovesick sidekick by my side*

*. He's not someone worthy of me.*

She panicked slightly, her face flushing as she tried to explain. "How could I hate you? I like... No, I mean...

"

Her cheeks turned red, and she fumbled over her words. Her eyes were playful, as if she were teasing the man she loved.

Norris recognized that look immediately.

As her fiancé, he had seen it countless times and always found her adorable.

But now, that same expression was aimed at another man. Norris felt a cold emptiness where affection should have been.

10:30 Mon, Sep **22**

Chapter 268 Just Friends?

**72**

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Completely unaware that the camera was recording her every move, Erin continued to flirt with Matthew. "You're so naughty!"

His smile softened even more. "Were you about to say you like me? Then tell me, who do you care about more? Me or your fiancé?"

On the other side of the screen, Norris held his breath, tense and desperate for her answer.

He knew he shouldn't feel this way.

He should trust Erin. There had to be some misunderstanding.

Yet, he couldn't look away. He stared intently at her on the screen, searching for some kind of

answer.

Meanwhile, Erin had no idea about that. She thought Matthew's questions meant he was finally falling for her and maybe even feeling a bit jealous of Norris.

10:30 Mon, Sep **22**

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Chapter 269 She's Been Deceiving You

Chapter 269 She's Been Deceiving You

*So what if he's the most devoted, lovesick second lead?*

*He's still just a pawn I can control whenever I want!*

**72**

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Erin pushed down the pride swelling in her chest, thought for a moment, and finally answered.

"Norris treats me well. Our families arranged our marriage when we were children. I believe being with him will make me happy.

"Matt, I can only see you as a friend. Friends are the ones who stay by each other's side, sharing both the good and bad times.

"Let's stay friends, okay? Please continue protecting me quietly from behind."

She didn't directly answer Matthew's question, but her words suggested her engagement to Norris was more a formality than love.

Her suppressed grievance left Matthew momentarily stunned.

It was as if he were under a spell, unconsciously believing she might love him. But with the engagement in place, she had to hide her feelings and remain just a friend.



Yet Matthew had always known she was putting on an act. He didn't know why she had approached him, but it definitely wasn't love.

Love was never there in the first place, so his sudden confusion disappeared quickly.

He didn't dwell on it, only admiring her acting skills. She almost fooled him.

His smile softened, but there was something more behind it.

*Silently protecting her for her sake? Do I look like a fool?*

Still smiling, Matthew tugged at his collar.

He almost got Erin to reveal what he wanted, but he couldn't resist asking again, "So, you mean the one you care about isn't Norris—it's me?"

"If you weren't engaged, would you choose me instead?"

Erin's eyes flickered in surprise at his bold question.

Chapter 269 She's Been Deceiving You

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**71**

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*Isn't the second lead supposed to quietly protect me from the shadows? Why does he need such a clear answer?*

Even though she was confused, Erin didn't overthink it.

She trusted her skills completely.

She had never failed except once with Ronald.

But he was just a minor character who was barely mentioned in the book. So when her trick didn't work on him, she didn't care at all.

After a brief pause, she followed his lead. "That assumption doesn't make sense. I didn't meet

you sooner.

“Matt, maybe we aren’t meant to be. Let’s just stay like this—quietly watching over each other, okay?”

Matthew’s smile softened, gentle and calm, though his eyes narrowed slightly, hiding a hint of mockery.

“Sure,” he said warmly.

His voice through the laptop hit Norris hard, heavy and final.

No matter how much he had trusted Erin before, he now understood the hidden meaning in her words.

Tracy calmly watched his pale face and asked, “So now, do you still believe your fiancée is innocent and kind?”

Norris stared blankly at the screen, his mind torn between two thoughts.

One thought screamed, *See, the woman you’ve loved all these years is sly and unfaithful! She doesn’t care*

*about you at all—she’s been deceiving you!*

The other said, *No, that’s not true. Erin is kind and simple. There must be some misunderstanding. She wouldn’t do this!*

The two conflicting thoughts messed him up, making his head hurt.

It wasn’t until Tracy spoke again that he began to recover.

It was like a sudden realization hit him. “It’s you! You set Erin up!”

Chapter 269 She’s Been Deceiving You

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Norris leaned heavily on the table, agitated as if he had found the perfect excuse, though his shaking hands betrayed his nerves.

Tracy let out a soft laugh, showing no surprise at his reaction.

Whether Erin was there or not, Norris always seemed to find a way to blame Tracy. It had become a habit over the years.

Tracy and Norris had grown up side by side. She genuinely loved this gentle and aloof fiancé, who had always treated her kindly.

So, seeing him lose his composure over another woman, hearing his accusations and misunderstandings, she might have felt heartbroken and upset.

But she remained perfectly composed.

She even let out a mocking laugh. “Set her up? Look at the screen— isn’t that Erin? Or did I somehow force her *to* say those things?”

Chapter 270 His Condition

Norris’ lips quivered, but no words came out.

71

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Still, a voice inside him  
whispered, *That’s not true. Erin isn’t like that. She’s kind, innocent,*

*and naive. This must be a misunderstanding. It’s Tracy—she’s jealous of Erin. She’s behind all of this ...*

Even Norris couldn’t pinpoint exactly what Tracy had done, yet the thought looped in his mind like a curse he couldn’t shake.

Seeing his struggle to believe, Tracy snapped him out of it. “If you still doubt her, why not go downstairs and see for yourself?”

“I’ve saved the surveillance footage. They haven’t left yet. Check it and see if I set her up.”

Tracy stayed calm, even got up to go with him.

Norris, however, stayed frozen in his chair, his face growing paler by the second.

She let out a light chuckle, not bothering to hide her mockery.

Her laughter pierced Norris’ heart like a needle, impossible to remove or confront.

Tracy didn't sit back down. She looked down at him. "I'll leave the laptop here. Enjoy watching the other side of your sweet fiancée."

With that, she walked away without looking back.

Norris remained stunned, staring at the screen.

On it, Erin still smiled brightly, completely unaware of what had just happened, occasionally glancing at Matthew with shy, flirtatious looks.

Piece by piece, Norris felt his heart break.

He stayed seated until his body went numb, then shakily stood.

He glanced at the laptop one last time and slowly headed downstairs.

Across the street, he stood at the entrance of the building for a long while but didn't. Eventually, he left.

go

inside.

From a nearby car, Tracy watched silently. When she saw him finally leave, even leaving the laptop behind, she couldn't help but sneer.

Chapter 270 His Condition

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She understood that with the Jackmans and Norris' obsession with Erin, they wouldn't fully believe what they saw, even if the evidence was right in front of them.

Luckily, Tracy had never intended for Norris to break up with Erin over that.

If Erin was trying to get close to Matthew, then who did she care about more? Matthew or Norris?

Could she somehow manage to charm both men at once with her unusual influence?

Without hesitation, Tracy revealed to Erin that Norris had seen her on a date with Matthew today.

As expected, Erin rushed to find Norris.

She played the innocent and pitiful role perfectly, coming up with a weak excuse for her meeting with Matthew.

With her “skills” backing her up, she quickly earned Norris’ forgiveness.

Of course, that was what Erin believed.

She had no idea that Norris had already seen another side of her, nor that his forgiveness hid darker thoughts. Still, she noticed a small change in his attitude.

Having known him so long, she understood that although he appeared calm, he was actually very proud and hated it when his reputation was compromised.

It was natural for him to be upset that his fiancée secretly met another man.

Erin happily tried to calm him down. After all, he was her destined leading man. Meanwhile, she believed she had also secured Matthew, so she was in a good mood.

She spent extra time dating Norris to get closer to him.

However, Matthew also began asking her out more often.

She reasoned that since she had just won over Matthew, she needed to keep him close, so refusing him too often wasn’t a good idea.

Erin spent almost all her energy to maintain those two men’s attention, leaving herself exhausted by the end of each day. Naturally, she had no strength left to stir up trouble in the

team.

By contrast, Tracy’s work became much easier.

Chapter 270 His Condition

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Once the project was back on track and Erin exhausted, Matthew finally approached Tracy.

He was a businessman who would do whatever it took to reach his goals. He agreed to go along with Tracy’s plan to trap Erin, but he had conditions.

He wanted to know everything David had told Tracy.

Being honest, she shared all of it without holding back.