The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late

Chapter 3 The Obedience They Want

Daphne gently held Erin's hand, her tone and expression full of affection. "You're not even close to fat! Why starve yourself? It kills me to see you do that." Erin clung to Daphne's arm, acting cute. "Mom, am I the prettiest in your heart?" "Of course. You're the most gorgeous girl in the world," Daphne said lovingly and happily, with no trace of the concern she had shown for Tracy earlier. Benjamin's stern expression relaxed into something softer. Liam put away his arrogant anger and looked pleased. Even the serious Andrew had a faint smile. They all surrounded Erin like a happy, warm family. No one seemed to remember that Tracy had just come back after two years away. Tracy stayed near the entrance, blank-faced, watching the cheerful scene like an outsider. She'd seen it so many times before. Every time, it sparked anger, jealousy, and bitterness inside her. She had tried more than once to become part of that warm family, only to be met with looks of disgust and contempt. "Tracy, why do you have to be so petty and compete with Erin?" "Tracy, you're so annoying!" "Tracy, can you just stay away from us?" "Tracy … " Tracy knew she wasn't wanted, so no matter how deeply she once craved their love, she'd never bother them by trying to fit in again. She kept her head low and stepped back, shrinking into herself. She tried to disappear from a place where she never fit. Eventually, they finally remembered Tracy was still there. Their joyful and warm expressions faded. Daphne finally reached out again and gently asked, "Tracy, why aren't you saying anything? Did someone bully you at school?" Tracy stiffened. Her arm trembled as Daphne held it. She used to love talking, always trying to start conversations, like it was the only way to remind them she was there. But to them, she was just loud and annoying. They thought she was nothing like Erin, who was quiet, obedient, and well-mannered. At Angelic Etiquette Academy, every word Tracy said got her punished. So, she learned to be quiet. Wasn't that what they wanted from her? Tracy pulled her arm back, stepped away, and said in a low voice without looking up, "Thanks for asking, Mrs. Jackman. No one hurt me. Things went fine at the school." She knew she was lucky—some people never made it out of that place alive. Daphne stood frozen, unsure if Tracy's pulling away or her calling her differently had made her eyes turn red. "Tracy, you … " Wasn't Tracy supposed to be the one closest to her? Erin quickly caught on to the moment. She grabbed Daphne's hand and looked at Tracy with teary eyes. "Tracy, Mom really cares about you. Don't act so cold. You just hurt her feelings. "If anyone is to blame, it's me. I'm the one who came back and took their love from you. I shouldn't have told everyone you pushed me. It's all my fault … " Erin's sobs immediately drew Daphne's attention. She hugged Erin protectively. "No, Erin, this isn't your fault at all. Don't cry. You did nothing wrong." Whatever small guilt Daphne had felt toward Tracy vanished, replaced with full-blown sympathy for Erin. She thought Erin was just too considerate. Seeing them cry, Liam turned gloomy. "Tracy, you just got back, and you're already giving Erin a hard time? That's too much! Apologize to her right now!" Tracy couldn't figure out what she'd done that counted as "giving her a hard time." She hadn't said a word to Erin since walking in. And until now, she still didn't understand how those past accusations of bullying had come about. But none of it mattered. She'd walked a long way today. All she wanted now was to rest. So, she bowed her head to Erin and said sincerely, "I'm sorry, Ms. Erin. I didn't mean to upset you. Please forgive me." She didn't know what she did wrong, but she knew how to give a flawless apology—the kind that sounded genuine. If Erin needed it, she could repeat a dozen more in different ways. Liam was still furious. "I told you to say sorry, and you're still making excuses! I—" He froze mid-rant when he realized she had apologized. His face stayed twisted with rage, looking

somewhat ridiculous. Everyone else was just as shocked to see Tracy bow and cower. No one expected her to apologize so easily. Back then, even when Benjamin whipped her, she still wouldn't admit she was wrong. That was why they sent her to the Angelic Etiquette Academy—because she shoved Erin down the stairs and almost killed her, but she never once admitted that she was responsible. In awkward silence, Erin suddenly moved and helped Tracy up. Her face was full of emotion. "Tracy, this is the first time you've ever apologized to me. Of course, I forgive you. "You used to always get the wrong idea about me and hurt me many times. But I believe you truly regret it this time, not like before when you pretended to back off just to stab me in the back later." She looked toward the others. "Dad, Mom, Andrew, Liam, you also believe in her, right?" Her words seemed to snap them out of it, and they all turned to Tracy with disdain. "Erin, how can you still trust someone like her?" Liam stepped in front of Erin and shot Tracy a sharp look. "Don't think I don't know what you're trying to do. You want us to let our guard down so you can mess with Erin again. "You came home late on purpose just to make it look like Erin was the reason you didn't show. Now you're acting all pitiful so you can turn us against each other. Do you seriously think we're that dumb?" Tracy didn't even want to respond to his furious accusations. Still, she knew if she didn't explain herself, they probably wouldn't leave her alone.