

# The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late

## Chapter 5 She's Just Starving

There were lots of guest rooms in the Jackman Villa, but most weren't ready. The only one available was way down at the far end of the first floor. It used to be a maid's room and hadn't been cleaned up yet. Andrew peeked in but didn't step inside. "You'll have to settle for this one tonight. Mom will fix you up with a proper room tomorrow ..." Tracy wasn't paying attention. She was already checking out the space. The room was small—just enough for a bed, a nightstand, and a wardrobe. But it didn't smell bad, the bed wasn't moldy, and the lights were working. The door was just a step away from the bed. Compared to where she'd been for the past two years, this place was a serious upgrade. So, when Andrew said, "Don't think it's too tiny, and don't blame Erin ..." "I don't," Tracy cut in. "I like it. Thanks, Mr. Andrew." His words caught in his throat, and he felt weirdly relieved. Tracy and Erin were both his sisters. Andrew had always wished they could just get along. If Tracy had changed and stopped making things hard for Erin, he'd be glad to see it. "Alright then, get some sleep. I'll bring you to see Grandpa tomorrow. He's missed you a lot. He ..." As he spoke, he subconsciously reached out, intending to pat her head as he used to. But before he could, Tracy reacted fast. She shoved his hand away and jumped back. Thud! His hand slammed into the door, making him wince. His anger flared. "Tracy, what are you—" Then, he saw her face and froze. Tracy was pressed against the wall, eyes filled with fear, wariness, ferocity, and terror, like a scared animal ready to fight. Just a second later, she looked down and muttered, "S-sorry. I didn't mean to ..." Her voice was shaky. Her hands were clenched so tight, her whole body stiff like it hadn't happened at all. Andrew froze for a moment, feeling as if something blocked his chest. The pain in his hand didn't even matter anymore. He was at a loss for words. She wasn't the same person he remembered. After a long pause, he cleared his throat awkwardly. "Alright, sleep well." Then, he left. Once the door shut, Tracy let out a breath. The moment Andrew raised his hand, she thought she was back at the Angelic Etiquette Academy, surrounded by raised hands holding stones, sticks, whips, or worse. She freaked out. Then, suddenly remembering something, she started searching the room. Under the bed, she spotted a pen. She grabbed it, yanked off the cap, and held it tight like a weapon. She switched on every light, climbed into bed, and curled up in the corner with her back to the wall. Only then did she feel safe. She clutched the pen to her chest and kept her eyes on the door, just in case someone came in. The light brightened up the room, but it didn't do anything to ease the fear inside her. Morning came. As the maids started moving around, the sounds woke Tracy up. She glanced around the bright, unfamiliar room, needing a moment to realize she wasn't at the etiquette school anymore. She had finally escaped that hell. Even though she knew nobody wanted her around, she still got up early and slipped into the kitchen. She offered to help the chef while putting together something simple to eat. Breakfast here was fancy and light, all about looks, so there was always a lot of untouched food. Tracy wasn't picky. Once she got permission, she ate the leftovers, even picking up two small tomatoes that had rolled off to the side. She was starving. Her last real meal was two nights ago when she exchanged a beating for half a piece of bread. She hadn't tasted anything warm, fresh, and sweet like that in two years. Watching her shovel food into her mouth like a robot, the chef gave her a sympathetic glance. He used a misshapen, almost-thrown-out fried egg to make a plate of pasta. "Ms. Tracy, have this instead." She quickly swallowed and accepted the plate with both hands, her eyes full of gratitude. "Thank you." In truth, she wasn't that hungry anymore. Going through two years of eating one meal and then going hungry the rest of the day had shrunk her appetite. She couldn't eat

much anymore. But she'd learned never to leave food behind. If she didn't eat it right away, someone else would take it. And she never knew when the next meal might come. Eating more at once had become her only way of getting through the day. Tracy finished every bit of the pasta, even the sauce. She hadn't felt full in so long. It almost felt fake. Lying back with her hand on her belly, she felt like she was dreaming. Whenever she was close to passing out from hunger, she used to imagine delicious food to fill her. "Geez, what are you? A stray? Never seen food before?" A mocking voice snapped her out of that moment. Her comfortable smile instantly vanished. Benjamin was standing in the doorway, looking annoyed. She instinctively tried to hide what she was holding, then realized it was just an empty plate. No one here would fight her for food. She felt somewhat at a loss. Benjamin looked even more disgusted. "I poured so much money into your etiquette lessons, and it was all for nothing! Thank God you're not my real daughter. Erin only trained for four years and still turned out better than you did in 18 years." Tracy didn't reply. She just lowered her head and endured his reproach and disdain. Back then, whenever Benjamin said Erin was better than her, she'd fight back, wanting to prove him wrong. But now? She'd accepted it. She was just a fake daughter who lived a glorious life that wasn't hers for 18 years. There was no way she could measure up to the real daughter. Benjamin's face turned serious. "If you've already forgotten all that etiquette you were taught, then don't even bother sitting at the table. You'll just ruin the mood." He scoffed and walked off, not even sparing her another look. The chef gave Tracy a pitying glance, let out a silent sigh, and quickly served the prepared breakfast for the Jackmans. Tracy stared at the empty plate calmly. Benjamin's scolding didn't faze her. She'd heard worse before. His words didn't even scratch the surface. Since Benjamin didn't want her around, she stayed in the kitchen, cleaning up and listening to the sounds of laughter and conversation coming from the living room. She didn't come out until everyone was done eating. The moment Tracy appeared, all the laughter and conversation in the living room came to an abrupt halt. Everyone instantly stiffened. It was like they'd just remembered she was in the house today.