

The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late

Chapter 8 Wasn't Even Called by Her Name

Hearing Franklin's voice only made Tracy cry harder, like everything she'd bottled up for the past two years was finally spilling out.

While she was stuck at the Angelic Etiquette Academy, she'd imagined this reunion over and over again.

She used to dream of running to Franklin like she did when she was a kid, crying about being picked on and hoping he'd defend her like always.

But now, when Franklin gently asked if she'd been treated badly, she just smiled through the tears and shook her head.

Of course, she had been mistreated.

That place was awful. She was always cold and hungry. They treated her like she didn't matter at all.

She wasn't even called by her name anymore-just "Number Ten."

People there could do whatever they wanted to her.

And the worse they treated her, the more they were praised for it.

The more cruel the punishment, the more they were rewarded.

She could barely sleep, afraid she'd wake up tied up, surrounded by terrifying faces that enjoyed her pain.

Of course, she felt hurt.

But still, when Franklin asked, she faked a smile and said, "I'm okay. Things were alright."

His hand shook as he brushed away her tears, clearly hurting for her. "Don't try to fool me. If everything was fine, then why are you so skinny?"

Tracy quickly wiped her face. "I was just trying to lose weight, Grandpa. Really. I'm doing alright now. I'm just happy I finally got to see you again."

Surviving that place, making it back, and being here with Franklin again? That was enough.

"Silly girl..."

Tears welled up in Franklin's eyes again.

He wasn't clueless. He knew her excuse was just that-an excuse.

My sweet granddaughter... What have they done to her that she can't even open up to me?

Sniffing, Franklin turned his angry gaze on Andrew, who had been standing quietly the whole time. "What the hell did you all do to her?!"

Andrew looked like he had no answers. "Grandpa, like I said, she was overseas this whole time. She's back now. Why can't you just believe that?"

"Don't give me that nonsense!"

Franklin was so mad that he grabbed the cup next to his bed and threw it.

At first, he really had thought she had left the country. He was hurt that she didn't even say goodbye.

But after a while, when no one answered his calls or messages, he started putting things together.

Being abroad didn't mean going completely silent. Tracy had always been thoughtful and caring. There was no way she wouldn't call-unless they stopped her.

He'd tried confronting them, but every time, it just ended with him too upset to breathe, falling into coughing fits.

Tracy rushed to his side and gently patted his back. "Please don't be upset, Grandpa. I'm back now. I'll stay with you and never leave again."

Right now, all she wanted was to be with him and away from the Jackmans. She wanted to be far from that awful place and just live peacefully for once.

Franklin could tell she didn't want to argue anymore, and it only made his heart break more.

What have they done to the girl I raised like a treasure?

His voice trembled as he stroked her head. "That's all I care about ... I'm so happy you're back."

Tracy nodded, her chest tight with emotion.

It felt like she'd been drifting in the middle of nowhere, and finally, she was home.

Franklin looked at her-still so fragile, still relying on him-and it tore him up inside.

"Tracy, from now on, I'm gonna protect you. No one's allowed to hurt you again."

Her eyes got teary again.

She blinked fast, trying not to cry. "Okay. I'll stay here in the hospital with you."

She had only gone back to the Jackmans' place for him. Now that he was here, she had no reason to go back there.

But Franklin shook his head. "No way. You're young. You shouldn't be stuck in a hospital room all day.

"You stay at home. Once I get discharged, I'll come visit you myself."

If he hadn't had that serious fall two years ago, he would've checked out of the hospital and left with Tracy

now.

He knew she was about to argue, so he put on a serious face. "What, do you not do as I say anymore?"

He could see it-Tracy didn't want anything to do with the Jackmans..

She'd clearly gone through hell.

But she was his granddaughter, the girl he'd raised and loved for 18 years. He wasn't about to let her get pushed aside again.

He held her hand tight. "I've waited two years for this moment. You promised to stay with me. Don't break that promise now, alright?"

Seeing the look in his eyes, she couldn't say no.

She sat with him, chatting softly until he looked tired. Only then did she get up and quietly leave.

Finally seeing her again brought life back into Franklin's face.

Walter Page, who had been with him for nearly 50 years and cared for him in the hospital these past two years, noticed right away.

After that accident at the estate, Franklin had never really bounced back.

He couldn't sleep most nights, constantly worrying about Tracy. He'd wake up crying from nightmares, saying he saw her begging him to help.

He'd been sending people to find her, never caring about his own health. Now that she was back, Walter could finally breathe easy too.

He quickly brought over the day's meds. "Mr. Jackman, you have to take care of yourself. You've got to stick around for Ms. Tracy."

"You're right," Franklin said. "I need to live longer... so I can protect Tracy."

For the first time in two years, Franklin didn't complain about taking his meds. He even cooperated with the doctors.

And deep down, he felt relieved.

He was glad he had asked the servants to hide the wheelchair. If Tracy had seen that, she'd be even more heartbroken.

But what he didn't know was that she already was.

Even after leaving the hospital, Tracy couldn't stop thinking about how much Franklin had aged. His hair turned completely white, and he looked so weak. How much had he worried about me?

Andrew noticed her quietly wiping her tears and gave a satisfied smile. "You've really grown up."

If this were the old Tracy, she would've told Franklin everything and gotten Erin in trouble right away.

Feeling smug, Andrew added, "So, what do you want as a reward?"

Back then, Tracy always acted sweet and obedient when she wanted something. He figured this was just the same old routine.

She didn't rat Erin out, so he was even willing to give her something big as a reward for all she'd "endured" the past two years.

But Tracy just wiped her face with the back of her hand and shook her head. "Thanks, Mr. Jackman. I don't 3/4

want anything."

To Andrew, she was just a manipulative girl. Even now, when she was playing along just to keep Franklin from worrying, he thought she was faking it to get something out of him. In his eyes, she was still the same selfish, calculating brat.