

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

## **#Left Behind 81 - Read The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late Left Behind 81**

Chapter 81 Pride

From Come

No one had imagined that a full-grown man would stand in the middle of the street and so proudly and cheerfully announce that he was being kept.

“You... You...” Liam’s voice faltered as he stared at him for a long moment, unable to form a single coherent word.

When his voice finally returned, it was sharp and demanding. “What did you just call her?”

That name had always been his alone, from the time they were children until now.

Ronald answered as though the question were absurd.

“Of course I called her CeeCee. What’s wrong, did you go deaf this young? Poor guy.”

“You-” Heat flushed across Liam’s face, turning it a deep shade of red.

He shifted his glare toward Tracy. “Who is he, and what right does he have to call you that?”

“My affairs have nothing to do with you, Mr. Liam.”

Tracy’s tone remained cold as she turned toward Ronald, ready to walk away.

“Don’t you dare walk away from me!” Liam surged forward and grabbed her hand.

His eyes, reddened with emotion, caught the faint glimmer of unshed tears.

“Tell me who he is. Why does he get to call you CeeCee?”

His voice softened into something almost pleading. “You told me I was the only one who could call you that.”

The tone made a faint ache stir in Tracy’s chest, the kind she thought had faded long ago.

Since they were kids, whenever Liam had spoken her name in that gentle, coaxing way, she would do anything he wanted her to.

But now, she simply pulled her hand free with steady resolve.

"I suggest you don't get so close to me, /Mr. Liam. We're not that chummy. Speaking of chummy, your beloved sister is right there."

Her eyes flicked toward Erin, who had been silent since stepping out of the car.

A short, humorless laugh escaped her. "If you need a reminder, I'll give you one.

"You were the one who said I wasn't your sister anymore. You called me malicious and said Erin **was** the only one you recognized as family. You told me to stop claiming I was part of the Jackman family because I embarrassed you."

Her voice cut through the air, every word sharp and unyielding, and with each one, Liam's face **grew paler**.

**1/3**

09:18 **Fri, 6 Sept**

Chapter 81 Pride

**It** was clear the memory was clawing its way back to him.

Shame clouded his expression, and Erin's chest tightened.

She stepped forward quickly, her eyes glistening as she looked at Tracy, "Please don't **get** mad, Tracy. It's my fault. Liam couldn't stand to see me hurt, so he lost his temper and said those things. If you need someone to pin the blame on, it's me."

Tears rolled freely down her cheeks. "If I hadn't come back, none of this would have happened. You wouldn't have fought with the family or made those mistakes. I should never have returned."

Her words seemed to jolt Liam back. He stepped protectively beside her.

"Erin, how could you possibly be at fault? You suffered for 18 years staying away from home. The Jackman life was yours by right. Someone else took your place and lived in comfort while you endured hardship

When his gaze returned to Tracy, his guilt had been swept away by a flare of anger.

"Tracy, **if** you're upset over what I said, then you're the one in the wrong.

“If you hadn’t kept competing with Erin and trying to hurt her, I never would have said those **things**. This **is** entirely your fault.”

Tracy felt no surprise.

Perhaps it was because she had stopped expecting better from him long ago. Though there **was a** dull ache in her chest, it was faint and distant.

Before she could speak, Ronald’s voice cut in, calm but firm. “If you’re mad, CeeCee, just take it out on me. Don’t take it out on this... gentleman, however rude and barbaric he may have acted.”

Everyone turned toward him.

Ronald looked at Liam with wounded patience. “It’s all on me. If I hadn’t shown up in CeeCee’s life, this barbaric brute would never, in his painfully limited brain capacity, thought CeeCee was ... whatever slur his addled mind worked overtime to come up with. He’d never have spewed venom at her like a mindless viper.

“Oh, the horror. How brutish must this imbecile be to harm CeeCee so much? He should be more like me. I would want nothing more than to care for her, feel for her.”

Tracy stared at him, caught between silence and disbelief.

Seeing him imitate Erin’s teary tone with such precision made the heaviness in her chest vanish.

Liam’s expression darkened. “Shut your mouth, you shameless leech. Stop stirring up trouble.”

Ronald’s look remained innocent/“Stirring up trouble? Oh my, really? And here I thought I **was** doing a very convincing imitation of your precious Erin.

“Are you **really**

telling me that she’s registered her... brand of bitchiness **as** an exclusive? That **no** one else is allowed to say or act in a similar fashion?”

Liam glanced at Erin, catching the brief stiffness in her face and a **trace** of shadow in her **eyes**.

**2/3**

Chapter 81 Pride

That couldn’t be right—Erin would never look like that.

He blinked, and in an instant, her expression softened into the familiar fragility and grievance that always made him want to defend her.

Relieved, he told himself Erin wasn't like this smug young man.

She **was** gentle and good-hearted, which was why she took the blame for what Tracy had done.

He turned his **glare** back to Ronald.

"Not everyone **is as** spiteful **as** you. Erin's pure-**hearted**—nothing like **a** shameless freeloader with **a** scheming mind."

Ronald rolled his eyes. "My remarks about your noggin still stand. If **I** were you, I'd **stay** at home **and spare** everyone the embarrassment."

## Chapter 82 Sharp Remark

"She said nothing at all, mate. All she did was put on a mask, look a little hurt and teary-eyed, and **that** got you riled up? You were so ready to jump in and defend her like she's some sort of helpless damsel. **Did** she get you conditioned? Is she holding a bell somewhere? You're just going to show up like some kind of trained pup the moment she rings it?"

From the day he was born, Liam had been sheltered and praised. Never once had anyone spoken to him with such biting contempt. For a moment, he simply froze.

The fine lines of his youthful, handsome **face** shifted through sharp flashes of color, pale one second, flushed the next, like an artist's palette tipped and spilling.

Ronald gave him no time to regain his footing. He clasped Tracy's hand and steered her away.

They had barely covered any ground before Ronald let his voice carry, every word sharp enough to reach Liam. "I'd rather not stay and see what a rabid dog would get up to. Let's move before it tries to take **a piece** out of you, CeeCee."

The lingering cloud in Tracy's chest broke apart with his remark, and she found herself letting out a soft, genuine laugh.

At that very moment, Liam's mind snapped back into focus, and his anger surged hot and fast.

"Don't you walk away from me!"

He lunged forward, but Ronald had already pulled Tracy into the back seat of a taxi.

Liam stood seething, his fury burning for somewhere to go. With no target but himself, he turned and kicked his luxury car, each thud of leather against metal echoing his frustration.

Erin flinched at his outburst. Tears began streaming freely down her face. "Liam, are you mad at me?"

"It's my fault. If you hadn't stepped in for me, you never would have gotten in a fight with Tracy. If I had known it would lead to this, I would have just kept my mouth shut and let her pick on me." Her voice cracked, and she buried her face in her hands.

Liam had indeed been holding onto resentment, but those words stripped it away and left only regret. Erin's nature was pure and gentle. He could never direct his anger at her.

"Erin, this isn't about you. I'm furious with Tracy. She's the one who doesn't know how good she has it." "Really?" Erin's expression loosened and her eyes warmed. "I'm glad you're not upset with me."

She looped her arm through his with easy familiarity. "Liam, I think Tracy only spoke out of temper. If I talk to her, maybe I can give her a way out, and she won't stay upset."

He felt no unease at her closeness, only concern for her well-being.

"You can't go alone. What if she turns on you?"

Erin gave a fragile little smile. "If it makes you happy, Liam, I can take it."

**1/3**

**09:18** Frt 3 Sept

Chapter 82 Sharp Remark

Liam exhaled deeply. "Erin, you're far too kind. If only Tracy had even half your sense?"

Inside the taxi, Ronald glanced back just in time to see Liam charging forward, only to choke on a puff of exhaust from the departing cab.

Ronald laughed so hard the sound bounced off the glass.

The amusement was catching, and Tracy's lips curved upward, though she kept her laughter to herself

When the moment passed, her voice turned steady. "That man is the Jackman family's son. The rich family in Cloudville."

She had long suspected Ronald stayed close to her to hide who he really was. If not, he would never have used her name to open a bank account.

The Jackmans stood at the very top in Cloudville, and crossing someone like Liam so openly was anything but wise.

Ronald caught her meaning and dismissed it with ease. “Who he is doesn’t matter. What matters is—did that feel good, CeeCee?”

Her fingers tightened slightly where they rested on her knees.

The way he seemed to center her above all else was like the brush of a feather over her heart.

She studied his face for a long, thoughtful moment before the faintest smile touched her lips. Yes.

The dimple deepened in his cheek. “Then tell me, does it still bother you when I call you CeeCee?”

The question gave her

her pause.

Because of Liam and Erin, the name had always carried a bitter edge. Every time Ronald used it, something inside her recoiled.

Since they were hardly close, she had kept quiet about it. Yet she hadn’t expected him to read her so easily.

She wasn’t sure if it was the weeks she had spent hearing it from him or what had happened moments ago, but suddenly the sound of his “CeeCee” no longer stung.

She turned her head and met his gaze fully for the first time.

“Are you this sincere with everyone?”

She couldn’t gauge how much of it was genuine, but what she felt now was real enough.

Ronald tilted his head slightly, his eyes bright and unguarded.

“I am, but not everyone is worth it like you are, CeeCee.”

To most people, he had been a pawn from the moment he was born, one meant to be discarded **when the** game demanded it.

The taxi settled into a quiet lull.

**2/3**

## Chapter 82 Sharp Remark

Something small but undeniable shifted between them after that

Yet neither spoke of it, and life continued as before.

When Ronald bought himself a phone, the very first thing he did was save his number in Tracy's contacts and pin it to the top.

She let him.

She was bent over her work, adding the last careful touches to her sketches.

Not wanting to disturb her, Ronald left her in peace and went into the kitchen to cook.

## Chapter 83 Come Knocking

A sharp knock rattled against the door of the tiny rental apartment not long after

The kitchen door was closed, so Ronald didn't catch the sound. Tracy had no choice but to get up and see who it was.

As she moved toward the entrance, a question crossed her mind: who could be visiting at this hour?

When she opened the door, she was met with the last person she expected—Erin.

Erin's face was full of open contempt, and she didn't try to hide it when Tracy appeared. Tracy, how cari you stand living in a place like this?"

She pinched her nose with theatrical disgust and stepped back two paces, acting like the air inside was unbearable.

The moment Tracy laid eyes on her, her expression grew cold. "What do you want?"

Erin ignored the chill in Tracy's voice and moved forward with a bright, almost sickly sweet smile. "I came to apologize for Liam. I hope you won't **stay** mad at him, Tracy.

"To convince me to help, Liam spent his entire month's allowance on the latest designer bag and practically begged me to come."

Erin shook Tracy's shoulder lightly, making sure the bag hanging from her arm caught the light. "I told him it wasn't needed. We're family, and as his sister, helping family is a given. But he insisted, saying I'm his only sister and this was the only way to prove how serious he was.

"Tracy, Liam letting me come here is him giving you an out. One that gives you grace. Don't be stupid enough to throw it away."

She called it an apology but brought nothing but a tone thick with provocation and smugness.

That expression was all too familiar to Tracy/

Whenever they were alone, Erin would wear that look to brag about how much the Jackman couple adored her, how Andrew spoiled her, and how Liam always had her back.

But the moment the Jackmans appeared, she'd switch to a fragile, patient mask, whispering, "It's all my fault, Tracy. Please don't be mad." Her voice would be all soft and weak.

Her act made it seem like Tracy was the one bullying her.

Before, Tracy would have rushed to deny it, desperate for the Jackmans' approval. She'd lash out at Erin in frustration, which only pushed the family further away.

Now, she simply looked at Erin with the kind of distant curiosity one might reserve for a street performer.

She no longer cared about that family, so Erin's boasting felt as empty as a clown's performance.

When Tracy kept silent too long, Erin's confident smile flickered.

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09:18 **Fri**, 5 Sept

Chapter 83 Come Knocking

Something wasn't right Tracy **was** supposed to be seething with jealousy. How else the dare at Ed that and say nothing?



The quiet was broken by Ronald's voice calling from inside. "CeeCee, who's at the door?"

Erin's smug look turned to surprise as she leaned in, trying to see inside.

Tracy *is* living with a *man*?

Moments later, Ronald's handsome face appeared behind Tracy, bathed in sunlight. His gaze locked on Erin's expectant eyes.

*Wait, that's the woman who was with Liam back then.*

What the *heck* is *she* doing here?

Ronald frowned and his smile faded.

Erin's face brightened again. Her voice dropped to a soft, fluttering tone. "Hi, I'm Erin, heiress of the Jackman Enterprise. Are you my *older*

sister's boyfriend?"

Her wide eyes were innocent but clearly curious about Ronald.

Tracy's stomach dropped, and her hand gripped the door handle tighter without thinking.

The first time Erin met Tracy's friends, she had worn that same mix of shyness and interest, calling them with affection or using their names gently.

Soon enough, she had surrounded herself with them, becoming the center of attention.

As Chris once said, Erin could charm anyone easily, and she would fill them with the urge to defend her from any perceived harm.

And some of those friends promised Tracy they would stand by her and teach Erin a lesson, despite her new status as the Jackman family's favorite daughter.

Erin would turn them into her defenders in the span of an hour.

Parents, brothers, lovers, friends—everyone in Tracy's life eventually became Erin's.

How could Ronald, a man she barely knew, be any different?

She lowered her eyes, hiding the storm in her chest.

She had thought leaving Angelic Etiquette Academy meant she had nothing left to lose.

Yet in this moment, a sudden fear filled her.

She feared Erin was a curse she could never shake, that anything close to her would always be taken.

Tracy kept her head bowed, her presence heavy and quiet.

Erin lifted her chin, her smile shining with quiet victory.

### Chapter 83 Come Knocking

Right then, Ronald spoke. “Older? Hey, missy, if we take off that chunk of Earth’s crust you call **makeup** you’d have more wrinkles than a mole rat and the face of one. The crazy old bat in the local inylum would look like a supermodel next to that kind of face. CeeCee? She’d practically be a goddess, you filthy miral

Erin’s face froze.

Tracy snapped her head up, surprise flashing in her eyes as she stared at Ronald.

No one had expected him to say that.

“How dare you...” Erin’s voice trembled with rage **as** she clenched her teeth. Her eyes burned with a fury that seemed ready to tear him apart.

The trick that had never failed her—the charm that won over even those who grew up with Tracy for 18 years—shattered completely against this man.

**3/3**

### Chapter 84 Fight, Fight, Fight

### Chapter 84 Fight, Fight, Fight

“Oh please, don’t give me that look. We barely know each other, and you’re already acting like you’re **thy** best friend right off the bat. It’s called appropriate response.”

Ronald rolled his eyes, his face full of irritation.

He hooked his arm around Tracy’s and spoke seriously. “CeeCee, let’s get inside fast. She could be working for a human trafficking ring, and you getting kidnapped is the last thing I want.”

He pulled her inside while saying this, then shut the door with a heavy slam.

The door closed with such force it seemed like he wanted to bang it right onto Erin's face.

Ronald clapped his hands and shot Tracy a proud look, raising one eyebrow as if waiting for her to praise him.

That expression made Tracy smile softly, a gentle warmth spreading through her chest until her nose tingled.

She knew Ronald well enough to guess he wanted a compliment, and she started thinking of what to say.

Before she could speak, Ronald went ahead. "Did you see how I handled that, CeeCee?"

Tracy blinked, still unsure what he meant.

He sighed and explained again, "Next time someone you don't want to see shows up, no matter who they are, just send them away."

"Hey, they're human, we're human. Why should they get to trample all over us? 'Don't let yourself suffer over pieces of shit. Flush them down the toilet.'"

Tracy froze. His words struck her like little hammers pounding her heart.

So, someone really could see how much she was hurting.

After everything, anyone would be curious about the connection between Tracy and the person outside. Ronald was no different.

But he saw how much Tracy resisted Erin, so he held back his curiosity and didn't ask.

Instead, he said, "I need help with lunch today. CeeCee, want to lend a hand?"

Tracy swallowed the turmoil inside her and nodded.

They both knew better than to bring up what had just happened.

Ronald shut the kitchen door and pulled out his phone, playing music loud enough to cover any knocking from outside.

After some time, the knocking stopped. Erin gave up.

Before she left, she kicked the locked metal door hard.

**09:19 Fri, 5 Sept @**

## Chapter 84 Fight, Fight, Fight

Her dark, bitter look had no trace of the fragile, gentle girl she usually pretended to be.

She refused to believe that this man could be so loyal to Tracy, someone he barely knew

If there was even a hint of doubt in his heart, she would make him, like the Jackman family, her obedient dog.

The next day came.

When Tracy went to visit Franklin at the hospital, Erin took the chance to dress up and knock on Ronald's door again.

In a way, Erin showed a sharp, persistent spirit.

Ronald thought Tracy had come home early and opened the door with a smile, only to see the woman he had scolded the day before waiting there.

Compared to the flashy, expensive outfit she wore yesterday, she looked much simpler today

She wore a fitted white dress. Her long black hair was half down, held back with only a diamond-studded hairpin. Her makeup was light and clean.

She looked like an innocent young woman.

Ronald raised his eyebrows, crossed his arms, and leaned against the doorframe. "Who are you looking for?"

A smile curved his lips, dimples softening his cheeks.

Innocent girls, sexy temptresses, ice queens ...

No matter how he hid his identity, countless women had thrown themselves at him over the years

And where did *this* loony get the *dumbass* idea *that this outfit would work on me?*

Erin didn't notice his cold, mocking stare. She only saw his smile and thought her first step was working. She took a deep breath, eyes glistening with moisture. "Well, I'm looking for you. Can we talk Alone!"

Ronald chuckled softly, "As far as I'm concerned, we are alone. Unless you have some freaky shaman powers I don't know about."

Erin's expression stiffened for a moment before she quickly looked down. Tm here to apologize for what happened yesterday.

"I was just shocked that Tracy moved in with another man so quickly. I felt upset for my friend, and that's why I asked about you."

She had said it all, so Ronald naturally responded, "Yeah, we're cohabitating, but what does that have to do with your friend?"

Erin's eyes widened in surprise. "You don't know? Didn't Tracy tell you?"

"Well... if Tracy didn't tell you, she'll probably be made if I do,"

**09:19 Fri, 5 Sept**

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Chapter 84 Fight, Fight, Fight

Ronald pressed his lips tight.

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*Holy shit, this is worse than child's play. How'd CeeCee get trampled all over by some third-rate actress with a fourth-rate repertoire?*

This time, Ronald didn't play along. "You're right. I'll wait until CeeCee gets back and ask her myself

Erin blinked, confused.

*Wait, what? He should be asking me for answers right now!*

Erin bit her lip and spoke up. "It's not a big deal. I think you should stay out of it. The answer might hurt your relationship.

"I just want Tracy to be happy. Don't take it the wrong way. I think she's cut off contact with my friend."

Chapter 85 Seen Through Easily

15 Sfree Colms

She looked conflicted, her expression heavy with hesitation. “Actually... Tracy was dating my friend

before.

“My friend drove her around in a fancy car every day, brought her a ton of flowers, and even introduced her to his parents. But to **test** him, Tracy staged a fake kidnapping that scared my friend badly.

“When he found out it was all a trick, he got furious and broke up with her. Tracy even went after him afterward.”

Her eyes flickered with worry as she glanced at Ronald and spoke cautiously. “I don’t know if they still keep in touch, but since she’s dating you now, I doubt she contacts my friend anymore.”

Ronald’s smile faded slowly, the corners of his mouth tightening.

He knew about the kidnapping—Tracy had saved him during that crisis.

Still, he had never imagined their life—or—death experience would be twisted into lies by this woman.

A strange light flickered in Ronald’s eyes. “Did you come up with this yourself, or did someone feed you these stories?”

His voice turned so cold it made Erin shiver.

Yet beneath that, she felt a secret satisfaction.

His expression showed he believed her and began doubting Tracy.

Erin’s lips curled into a brief, sharp smile.

She lowered her gaze and said, “I saw it all with my own eyes. Tracy-”

Ronald cut her off abruptly. “So it’s all you,” he said, his voice carrying a weird edge.

Erin looked up and finally sensed something strange about him.

Before she could think further, Ronald beckoned her with a wave. “Come here.”

His face brightened with a smile, and his charming dimples made his handsome features even more striking.

Erin's eyes wavered,

Without hesitation, she stepped forward.

In an instant, his hand shot out and grabbed her neck.

The sound of her body slamming against the iron door filled the small space,

Erin's head spun from the impact, but there was no time to **react**. Forced to tilt her **head back**, **she** grabbed at Ronald's choking hand, her **face** full of shock.

**1/8**

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Chapter 85 Seen Through Easily

**+5 Free Coins**

His smile stayed fixed, and his eyes remained sharp and clear, but to Erin, his face had turned demonic.

"What are you..."

She opened her mouth to speak, but the grip tightened, making it hard to breathe.

Ronald let out a low chuckle. "How *dare* you spread made-up lies about CeeCee?"

His fingers squeezed slowly. "Every time you show up in her line of sight, her mood dips down into the deepest trench you can imagine. I'd rather that not happen, so how about

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He paused, dark intent flashing in his eyes. "How about I make sure you *never* have the chance to show your face around her again?"

Erin's pupils shrank instantly.

She felt the deadly seriousness in his threat.

"No..."

She tried to say more but only managed that single word.

Her chest tightened, air growing scarce. For the second time, Erin felt death so close.

The first time had been when she arrived in this world.

Erin feared death more than anyone. She valued her life above all else.

She had fought and schemed to take everything from Tracy.

After finally gaining her status and place, she could not die now.

But no matter how wildly she pleaded, even as her vision blurred, no one came to save her.

Just as she thought she was about to die, Ronald's grip loosened abruptly.

She gasped and coughed violently, collapsing to the floor with no trace of the innocent image she once carried.

Ronald looked down *on* her with a trace of disgust as he wiped his hand.

Though his face still wore a smile, his voice cut cold through the room. "I'll spare you for the first and final time, for CeeCee's sake. But if you try to start anything to hurt her again....

Erin's eyes widened with panic. She shook her head frantically, "No, no, I won't. I swear / won't."

Her skin was pale as she crawled backward, looking desperate and broken.

She couldn't understand where Tracy had found such a dangerous man.

Ronald tilted his head, his sunny smile still bright. "Ah, promises are great, but when they come too fast? That mars it. Tarnishes it. Brings down the credibility from ten to zero. I can't find it in myself to trust

your words."

**09:19 Fri, 5 Sept @J**

Chapter 85 Seen Through Easily

Erin's eyes grew wide with terror "Don't come closer"

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Free Coins



Somehow, she found strength she didn't know she had. She scrambled up and ran wildly toward the exit

Ronald chuckled softly, hands in his pockets, strolling after her at a slow pace.

Seeing him follow, Erin ran faster.

She rounded the staircase and dashed down the long hallway.

Finally, she spotted a group of elderly neighbors gathered, chatting together. "Help... Help me!"

Erin stumbled toward them and collapsed right in front of their circle.

"Oh my, what happened, my dear? Come on, slow down. Talk to me."

Chapter 86 Convinced

Chapter 86 Convinced

Chapter 86 Convinced

Neighbors hurried forward, their faces full of concern as they helped Erin to her feet.

She clung tightly to the woman who steadied her, as if holding on for dear life.

"I... she began to speak, but then a voice cut through the crowd.

"Zoey!"

Ronald called out with practiced ease, greeting the woman like an old friend.

"Well, if it isn't Ronald.

"It's been a while. What have you been up to?

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15 Free Coins

"I took your advice and had my grandson switch jobs early. Turns out his old boss actually ran off with the company's money. All those stock options? Just lies."

"That chess move you taught me last time? I studied it for days. We should play again soon."

“You were right, Ronald. Without my useless son messing up the messages between me and my daughter-in-law, our fights have dropped by half.”

“Ronald...”

The older neighbors, who had been surrounding Erin, shifted their attention to Ronald and responded warmly.

From financial advice to everyday tips, Ronald had helped nearly every elder in the neighborhood. That earned him their trust and loyalty.

Erin’s face paled as she watched the scene, her brief hope fading into deep worry.

She regretted sending her bodyguard away just to keep the Jackmans from tracking her.

Her eyes darted around frantically as she tried to flee.

But Ronald kept his gaze locked on her and made no move to let her go.

“Everyone, you need to be careful if you see this woman around,” Ronald warned, pointing directly at Erin.

All eyes turned back to her.

She froze mid-step, panic rising fast.

She tried to speak, but Ronald cut her off sharply.

“I don’t know this woman at all. But she acted like she was family with CeeCee when she came **over** yesterday. Today, she came looking for me while CeeCee was out.

“Maybe she thinks the innocent, charming **act**

would work on me because I’m **a** young man. The moment we met, she started spreading nasty rumors about CeeCee and tried to cozy up to me like **a** common

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Chapter 86 Convinced

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“But the hallway was so dark, I thought this woman was a mugger, so I had to defend myself. Then she screamed bloody murder and ran away, so I came after her.”

Ronald spoke fast, his face showing fake hurt.

He was handsome and smooth with his words, and over time, he had won over every elder in the neighborhood.

No one doubted him. They all looked at Erin with suspicion and doubt.

Everyone knew Ronald lived with his “sister”. Though no one knew her real name, they knew both were orphans.

Two young people living in such a run-down building, especially in the worst stairwell, earned the neighborhood’s sympathy.

So when Erin stirred up trouble, no matter how innocent or pitiful she looked, no one took her side.

“She’s young and beautiful, but guess that beauty is only skin-deep.”

“What kind of woman does things like that? Her parents would be ashamed.”

“Get out of our neighborhood! If I see you again, I’m going to teach you a lesson you deserve.”

The neighbors, fired up, pushed Erin roughly toward the exit, some even spitting at her in anger.

Erin had never been so humiliated before.

Since returning to the Jackmans, she had always been the center of attention wherever she went.

But now, her greatest strength failed her against a group of stubborn old folks.

She stood there, disheveled and defeated, her dark eyes burning with a rage that felt ready to ignite the entire run-down neighborhood.

She took several deep breaths to calm herself. Then she looked up toward the nearby street.

A weathered utility pole held a security camera that still worked. It captured the exact spot where she stood.

After a pause, Erin began walking toward the camera.

Just as she reached the street, a white van without a license plate pulled up beside her.

Three men, faces hidden behind hats and masks, jumped out. They grabbed Erin before she could react

and forced her into the van.

The whole scene unfolded in less than ten seconds. Even if passersby noticed, they had no time to **stop it** and could only call the police/

Within 30 minutes, the Jackmans had learned Erin had been kidnapped.

## Chapter 86 Convinced

Andrew, in the middle of a company meeting, dropped everything and barked orders Find out who the kidnappers are. How dare they touch my daughter on my turf

Liam, a racing fan, skipped his race and ran multiple red lights on the way home. If I find out whethe kidnappers are, they're done for!"

Even Benjamin, who always put the company first, rushed back with Daphne. 'How dare they touch my daughter! They think we're easy prey?"

## Chapter 87 Is Tracy's Kidnapping Real?

### \$5 Free Cams

Even before the kidnappers reached out, the Jackmans were already preparing to take action, as though the thought of Erin being hurt in the slightest was something they would never, ever tolerate.

But before they could make a move, the phone rang with the kidnappers on the line, "If you want Ms. Jackman back unharmed, send five million to the account I'll give you within 30 minutes, or else.

"Alright, I'll do it! Just don't hurt my daughter!" Daphne cut in before the caller could finish, her voice trembled, already on the edge of breaking.

Benjamin wrapped an arm around Daphne, his gaze dark with both anger and fear, showing no attempt to hide his worry.

Andrew was more composed than Daphne, but behind those gold-rimmed glasses, his eyes burned with fury. "If you want the cash, we need proof she's alive and safe."

His voice carried a sharp warning. "We can pay, but if my sister is harmed in any way, I swear you'll pay for it."

Liam's temper flared as well.

Yet something in the kidnapper's words stirred a different feeling in him.

*That phrasing... Why does it sound familiar?*

He froze, memories surfacing of the time Tracy had faked her own kidnapping—the kidnapper had used almost the same lines.

*But Erin was pure-hearted. She'd never do something like **that**.*

*Then... could it be that Tracy's kidnapping was real?*

The thought sent a jolt of alarm through him,

*No—if it was real, how did Tracy return  
without a scratch? She must have been pretending all along!*

He tried to convince himself of that, but when the kidnappers sent over a video, his certainty wavered.

On screen, Erin sat bound to a chair, a piece of cloth gagging her mouth, tears welling in her eyes as she stared at the camera.

Her face was filled with panic and fear, tears streaking down her cheeks, making her look pitifully vulnerable.

Still, her clothes were untouched, her hair perfectly in place, and apart from her pitiful expression and tied-up posture, there wasn't a trace of the usual chaos that came with being kidnapped.

Liam's mind drifted back to the video the kidnapper had sent when Tracy was being kidnapped.

When he compared them, Tracy had looked far more like the real victim.

Once this thought entered his mind, he couldn't push it back down.

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**09:20 Fri, 5 Sept @**

## Chapter 87 Is Tracy's Kidnapping Real?

He found himself weighing Erin's situation against Tracy's.

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The more he considered it, the more convinced he became that Tracy's kidnapping had been **real**.

*Erin, being gentle and pure-hearted,*

*wouldn't lie about something **so** serious. So, that means Tracy was really kidnapped?*

*Tracy was simply less fortunate, falling into the hands of far crueler kidnappers than Erin.*

As Liam **was** lost in thought, Andrew's voice broke through, "Liam, what are you spacing out for?"

Liam quickly pulled himself back to the present, noticing that Benjamin, Daphne, and Andrew were already standing, prepared to leave.

Seeing him still standing there distracted, Andrew's brow creased. "The kidnappers have released Erin. Come on, we're going to bring her home."

The family hurried to the spot the kidnappers had mentioned, with Liam driving **so** fast it felt like he was

in a race.

When they got there, they found Erin lying near the road, her hair messy and her clothes wrinkled, looking far more shaken than she had in the video.

Even in her messy state, she still appeared fragile and helpless.

"Erin, are you okay? You scared me half to death!" Daphne cried as she pulled Erin into a tight hug, her voice trembling.

Benjamin looked relieved as he quickly moved to remove the ropes binding Erin.

Andrew gently helped her to her feet and checked her with worry. "Erin, how do you feel? Are you hurt anywhere?"

Liam had meant to step in too, but the sight of them like this made him suddenly freeze.

A sudden memory of Tracy came to mind—how she had returned alone, worn-out and looking abandoned after being kidnapped.

Back then, he had been too focused on exposing Tracy's scheme to notice much else. But thinking about it now, he remembered seeing blood on her.

*She had been hurt, yet hadn't mentioned it Could it be ... she really hadn't been acting?*

Liam's face turned pale.

He remembered what he'd told the kidnappers at the time, to throw the body farther **away** ...

For the first time, Liam felt a wave of guilt and regret toward Tracy.

He had assumed she was pretending, that everything was staged—he hadn't actually **meant** what he **said**.

His thoughts **were** a tangled mess, and all he could think about **was** finding Tracy right away **to set** things straight, so much so that he didn't notice the others calling his name repeatedly.

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Chapter 87 **Is** Tracy's Kidnapping Real?

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"Liam!"

Andrew's firm voice finally pulled him back to the present.

With a serious expression, he said, "You've been distracted for a while now. Didn't you hear Erin calling you over and over?"

Liam turned his head toward Erin and saw her looking at him with a hurt look in her eyes.

Even though she was the one being ignored, she defended him. "Maybe Liam was just too worried about me and didn't catch what I said."

Liam's heart softened.

He knew this wasn't the right time to bring it up, but those thoughts kept circling in his mind.

Chapter 88 The Person Behind the Kidnapping

Chapter 88 The Person Behind the Kidnapping

*Erin is so kind. She understands me.*

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Without second thoughts, he admitted, "Just now, I was thinking about the time Tracy was kidnapped....

The warm, easy mood froze the instant her name was brought up.

Liam didn't realize the shift and kept talking. "At that time, Tracy looked far messier than Erin does now, and she even had blood on her ... Could it be... that she wasn't pretending?"

No one had anticipated Liam bringing up Tracy out of nowhere, and all eyes turned toward him in disbelief.

Because of this shock, no one caught the slight tension that flashed across Erin's face.

*Seriously? Why would this idiot bring*

*up Tracy now? Shouldn't his attention be entirely on me?*

Since no one else said anything, Liam kept going. "It was also five million, and the same time limit—301 minutes. But Tracy looked way more disheveled than Erin...

He laid out the similarities between Erin's kidnapping and Tracy's, concluding, "Maybe we judged Tracy too harshly. Maybe that last kidnapping wasn't some scheme she staged herself."

When he finished, Liam glanced around with a glimmer of anticipation in his eyes.

The other Jackmans exchanged looks, their expressions showing clear irritation.

Daphne smacked the back of his head and snapped, "Are you implying Erin's the one faking? She just survived something terrifying, and this is what you think? Unbelievable!"



Andrew's voice was even sharper. "That was completely out of line. Apologize to Erin right now."

Benjamin stayed quiet, though his stare was heavy with criticism.

Erin didn't answer either. She only lowered her gaze, appearing deeply hurt.

Noticing their reactions, Liam was struck by an odd sense that he had experienced something similar

before.

Where have I seen *this* kind of scene?

Before he could figure it out,

Erin suddenly spoke on his behalf. "Dad, Mom, Andrew, please don't be angry with Liam. I'm sure he didn't mean it that way."

Liam, who had been feeling extremely nervous, clung to her words like a lifeline, nodding eagerly. agreeing with her words,

"Right, exactly! I never meant to question Erin. She's so kind-hearted, how could I ever doubt her? I just thought of Tracy and wondered if we got her wrong."

Hearing him still bring up Tracy's name, a flicker of unease rose in Erin's heart.

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Chapter 88 The Person Behind the Kidnapping

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Today, she was the one who had been harmed, yet from the very beginning. Liam hadn't even bothered to ask her about it—and he was still thinking about Tracy!

At first, all she wanted from this was the five million, and because of that, she hadn't even made a move against Tracy.

But now, she has changed her mind.

With a troubled look on her face, Erin said, "I'm not sure if Tracy's kidnapping was fake, but I think I've figured out who kidnapped me."

Those words instantly grabbed everyone's focus.

Liam reacted the fastest. "Erin, tell us. Who would dare to kidnap you? I'll make sure they pay!"

Erin glanced carefully at the worried faces surrounding her before slowly saying, "The one who kidnapped me... I think it was my sister."

The room fell completely quiet, the shock written on everyone's faces.

Andrew finally broke the silence. "You mean Tracy?"

His tone was deep, as if he couldn't decide whether to trust Erin or was dwelling on something unpleasant.

The next person to speak was Liam. "That's impossible, right? Erin, maybe you're wrong?"

Although he claimed it was impossible, doubt still colored his voice.

Even before saying anything, he had instinctively looked at Andrew.

Since Tracy had been involved in a kidnapping before, he wanted to stand up for her, but he didn't feel certain enough.

Erin also seemed to catch on, glancing cautiously at the serious-faced Andrew before going on. "I ... I guess I must've been mistaken.

"The kidnapper thought I had passed out, so they didn't bother hiding while making a call to the person behind it. That's how I heard her voice."

She paused, looking unsure, her words growing quieter but still making sure everyone could hear.

"It really sounded like Tracy, and I caught her saying... this kidnapping wasn't just about getting money. It was also to punish me. She claimed I took her place as the Jackmans' daughter."

With that, it was almost like she had directly pointed the finger at Tracy.

Nobody questioned if she was telling the truth. It was as if, deep down, they believed every word she said

without doubt.

“Tracy has crossed the line!” Liam shouted, smacking the leather seat under him, his eyes burning with

anger.

A moment ago, he had been defending her and even feeling bad for her, but now **he** realized that **Tracy**, with such cruel intentions, wasn’t worthy at all.

**2/2**

Benjamin and Daphne were seething with anger, but more than that, their hearts ached for Erin “Don’t be afraid, Erin. To us, you will always be our one and only daughter.

Andrew was the only one who didn’t speak, but his expression was cold enough to freeze the air.

He slid open the partition to the front seat and ordered the driver **in** a cold tone, “Step on it. We’re going back to jackman Villa first.”

They had originally planned to take Erin to the hospital, but after hearing what she said, a simmering anger burned in everyone’s heart, and no one tried to stop Andrew’s decision.

If Tracy truly had a hand in this, they were set on making her pay for it.

At that moment, Tracy remained unaware of what was about to come her way. She was in the middle of discussing something with Walter.

The following month marked Franklin’s birthday.

Because Tracy had been away for two years and Franklin had been staying in the hospital, he hadn’t celebrated it at all.

Now that his most beloved granddaughter had returned, Franklin was eager to make it a grand occasion. He placed the entire responsibility of planning the birthday party on Tracy.

For someone of Franklin’s age, a birthday party wasn’t all that important, but having Tracy handle it and insisting on making it big was his way of sending a clear message to everyone. That was, regardless of the surname she bore, Tracy had his full support.

Tracy knew exactly what Franklin was trying to say and turned him down multiple times, yet his persistence left her with no way to refuse.

For her, arranging a birthday party wasn’t a difficult job.

However, to make it truly impressive, she would need to make use of the Jackmans' influence.

She didn't want to be deeply tied to the Jackmans, and she wasn't even sure if they would be willing to follow her lead.

Walter seemed to pick up on her hesitation and quickly offered his support. "If you run into trouble, just come find me. Even though I haven't been the butler of the Jackmans for years, I can still lend a hand."

Tracy didn't turn down his goodwill "Thank you, Walter-

Her words were cut short by a furious shout, "Tracy!"

She turned around to see Andrew storming toward her, his face twisted with anger.

As the heir of the Jackmans, Andrew had been trained to keep his composure no matter the situation, *and* even someone like Tracy, who had known him since childhood, almost never witnessed him lose control.

Unless...

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### Chapter 89 A Slap

When he reached her, Andrew seized the front of her shirt. "Tell me the truth Were you the one wh arranged Erin's kidnapping?"

His grip was so firm that it pressed against her throat, making it hard for her to breathe

His eyes, blazing with fury, glared at her as if she were a sworn enemy.

Tracy flinched from the pain. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

She tried to pull away, but Andrew's hold became even stronger. "I let things slide once before, so why would you have someone kidnap Erin? Are you trying to hurt her the same way you ....

His words suddenly stopped, his bloodshot eyes locked on hers.

Although he didn't say the name, Tracy understood exactly who he meant.

In fact, everyone present knew the name he'd left unsaid.

Tracy stopped resisting and met his burning stare. Her voice was firm as she said, “I never told anyone to kidnap Ms. Jackman, and no one kidnapped Mir ... her.

“Andrew, I’ve explained this to you so many times, but you never believe me. You wouldn’t even believe the police investigation.

“You always decide someone’s guilty just because you think so, both now and in the past, you...

“Enough!”

Like a cat whose tail had been stepped on, Andrew suddenly lifted his arm and slapped Tracy across **the** face.

It happened so quickly that nobody reacted before the sharp slap echoed in the air.

“Ms. Tracy!”

Walter hurried over, nearly stumbling as he tried to catch Tracy, who had been slammed backward.

But his age slowed him down, and before he could reach Tracy, she fell hard, her head hitting the floor.

By the time he got to her, a hot stream of blood was running from her forehead.

The bright red against her skin shocked everyone, even the enraged Andrew.

Panic welled up inside him as he awkwardly held the hand that had just struck Tracy.

“I didn’t mean to

Andrew tried to explain, but when his eyes met Tracy’s frozen stare, the words died in his throat.

It felt like an ice cube had slipped under his clothes in the middle of winter, sending a sharp chill through him and snapping him awake

Since when did her eyes toward him turn colder than the way she looked at strangers?

**2/3**

Chapter 89 A Slap

She used to tell him he was the greatest brother in the world, that even if she married someday, **she’d still** count on him forever.

Now, he couldn't even remember the last time she had looked at him with warmth or trust.

A rush of fear hit him, and without thinking, he stepped forward—only for Walter to hold him back. “**Mr.** Andrew, you shouldn't get any closer!”

Andrew's expression tightened, and he adjusted his glasses without thinking. “I didn't mean to...”

Chapter 90 They Always Hurt Her

Chapter 90 They Always Hurt Her

Walter spoke sharply, his eyes flashing with a mix of anger and sarcasm. “I know Mr. Andrew didn't mean to do it. So, hitting Ms. Tracy wasn't on purpose. Pushing her until her head was bruised and bleeding wasn't on purpose either. Just like the last time, Mr. Liam almost killed Ms. Tracy right in front of me and Mr. Franklin—it was all an accident, right?”

“You and your family keep attacking Ms. Tracy, even when it almost costs her life, but you'd still say it wasn't on purpose, right?”

Andrew had no words.

Liam lost control and almost killed Tracy. He was the one who pushed her, causing her to fall and bleed. It was true that they had hurt her.

But they never intended to do it.

All along, they just wanted Tracy to stop being jealous and greedy and to get along with Erin.

That was their only wish, but Tracy never managed to do that...

Walter took a deep breath to calm down, worried he might lose his temper and confront Andrew.

“I'll take Ms. Tracy to the hospital first. If Mr. Andrew needs anything, just come find me!”

He supported the silent Tracy and walked out without looking back at the Jackmans.

Tracy's cold behavior made Andrew nervous inside. He wanted to follow her, but Erin stopped her.

“Andrew, Walter and Tracy are very upset now. Chasing after them won’t fix anything. It’s better to wait until they’ve cooled down.”

Erin sounded thoughtful. “I believe Tracy will understand you. She should know you only lost your temper and pushed her because you were thinking about Miranda.”

The moment she said that name, everyone stared at Andrew with tense expressions. Sure enough, his expression darkened.

The vacant stare he’d been giving in the direction Tracy left was now filled with rage again.

Andrew turned back to Erin and promised seriously, “Erin, don’t worry. I will make sure Tracy explains *the* kidnapping.

He had forgiven Tracy once before, but she hadn’t shown any regret and instead used the same tactics against Erin.

This time, he wouldn’t forgive her so easily!

Erin’s eyes were a little red, and she was feeling moved. “Andrew, you’re really so good to me.”

Tracy’s wounds looked bad at first, but they **were** only scratches, nothing **serious**.

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Chapter 90 They Always Hurt Her

Still, Walter felt a deep ache in his heart.

What hurt him more was that Tracy didn’t even cry out or show pain while her wounds were being treated

It **was**

like she was used to getting hurt.

Tracy from before would have cried or complained to Franklin if she were hurt like this.

Walter couldn’t help but ask, “Ms. Tracy, what exactly did you go through while you were abroad these **last** two years?”

The Jackmans had hidden Tracy's location so well that neither he nor Franklin had found any clues about her. Naturally, they had no idea what she had endured.

Tracy, who used to be lively and full of joy, has changed into who she is now. She must have gone through a great deal of hardship.

Of course, Tracy wouldn't share what she'd been through these past two years.

She didn't want to, and she couldn't either....

Walter understood how stubborn she was.

Once she made a decision, no matter what others said, she wouldn't change her mind easily, and no matter how curious he was, he couldn't get her to open up.

So, he decided to change topics. "I won't bring up the past, but I will look into the issue Mr. Andrew mentioned earlier."

He wasn't sure what proof Andrew had to accuse Tracy directly, but he trusted that she would never kidnap

anyone.

Tracy felt a small pain inside.

When Andrew questioned her, all she felt was a mix of amusement and resignation—no other emotions stirred inside.

She knew that if anything happened to Erin, any effort to show she was innocent would just be seen **as**

**an** excuse by the Jackmans, and no one would believe her.

That was why she didn't plan to explain or care about their accusations.

It wasn't that she wasn't hurt from being falsely accused—of course she was—but she believed no one would care about her pain anyway.

Tracy quietly agreed, "Alright, Walter, please find out what really happened."

Maybe worried she would be treated badly if she went back home, Walter still wanted Tracy to stay **in** the hospital, even though she was okay.

Tracy didn't want to meet the Jackmans either, so she agreed to stay there.

But even though she didn't want to **see** them, someone showed up on their own.



Chapter 90 They Always Hurt Her

When Liam walked into her ward, Tracy had just finished a call with Ronald.

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She had planned to finish the sketches tomorrow, but because of her unexpected stay in the hospital, she had to postpone and let Ronald know.

But right after she ended the call, Liam came in, and her smile quickly disappeared.

Noticing her sudden change, Liam's friendly smile froze before it could fully form.

At first, seeing her smile, he thought she was feeling better, and that had eased his nerves just a little.

But now, he felt disappointed.

Liam paused for a moment, then carefully stepped closer from the doorway.

"CeeCee, I heard you're in the hospital, so I came to visit you."