

The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late #Left Behind 91 - Read The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late Left Behind 91

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Tracy said sharply, "I'm fine, Mr. Liam. You don't need to worry, and please don't call me

CeeCee."

Liam stopped where he was, not stepping forward but not walking away either.

He said calmly, "I know you're upset with Andrew. Yeah, he was a little rough. I apologize on his behalf.

"But he was just ... a bit emotional because of what happened earlier. He didn't mean to. Please don't be angry at him."

Though he came to apologize, he showed up empty-handed, and between the lines, his words implied that if Tracy was still upset, it was her being unreasonable.

Luckily, Tracy wasn't expecting anything nice from him, and his words didn't affect her *at all*.

"Mr. Liam, if you're done talking, please leave. I have a headache and need to rest."

She didn't even look at Liam as she pressed the button by her bed.

Walter had told the hospital staff exactly what to do, so as soon as the bell rang, the nurse and doctor quickly came over to help her.

Tracy pointed at Liam. "He's bothering me. Please take him out and don't let him in again if he shows up."

The doctor and nurse glanced at each other and then quickly went up to Liam to ask him to leave.

Liam expected her to be angry or ignore him, but he didn't think she would actually make them kick him out.

"Wait I still have something important to say!"

The medical staff stopped and looked at Tracy, waiting for her to decide.

Tracy didn't want to spend much time with Liam, but she didn't insist on kicking him out either.

It was strange for Liam to stay calm after being ignored so many times.

Curious, she looked at him and asked, "What do you want to say?"

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Liam quickly walked past the medical staff.

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He looked at Tracy, hesitating before he asked, "I wanted to talk about the kidnapping from before... was it real?"

Tracy was honestly surprised that this was what he was nervous to ask. She frowned, confused, as she studied him carefully.

Liam felt uneasy under her stare. "Why ... Why are you looking at me like that?"

Tracy sneered, "I just don't get why you're asking me that, Mr. Liam. Whether it happened or not, you all already made your decision, right?"

"Now you come here, acting like you'd believe me just because I say so."

Her eyes showed sarcasm. "Besides, it's been such a long time since it happened, and you only thought to ask me now. Isn't that funny?"

Liam's face went from pale to red, and he couldn't look at Tracy directly.

But after the guilt, his face flushed with anger, as if his hypocrisy had been exposed. "I really just wanted to check on you. Why do you have to be so sarcastic? No wonder everyone likes Erin more than you!"

The moment the words left his mouth, Liam regretted them.

He was aware that Tracy often measured herself against Erin and tried to outdo her, so he spoke without thinking.

That wasn't what he truly meant ...

Tracy's face became tense, and her hand at her side tightened without her meaning to.

She understood that, in the Jackmans' eyes, she would never be as good as Erin.

But hearing it straight from Liam still hurt her deeply.

Holding back the emotions welling up inside, she said, "Please take Mr. Liam out."

"What? You can't ... Don't push me, let me go. Do you know who I am?"

The medical staff helped push Liam out quickly. Even when he mentioned his status, no one paid him any mind.

His shouting only drew curious stares from bystanders, who assumed he was one of those

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troublemakers causing a scene at the hospital.

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Liam had never been treated so badly before. Although he was angry, he didn't dare fight back.

The hospital belonged to Franklin and was his private property. Even the Jackmans had no right to interfere. These staff were following Walter's orders, so Liam didn't dare cause trouble.

Besides, they were only kicking him out because Tracy told them to.

All the blame was on Tracy now.

Liam felt a mix of frustration and anger welling up inside.

He had made this trip just for Tracy.

If the kidnapping thing was just a misunderstanding, he definitely wanted to defend her, but he didn't expect her to be so ungrateful!

With a cold snort, he turned around and stormed off in fury.

He had already tried to make peace, but Tracy kept pushing him away. She really didn't understand what was good for her!

Because Liam came to see her, Tracy's good mood quickly turned sour.

She had planned to get some sleep, but she kept tossing and turning, unable to rest. So, she got up and went for a walk to get some fresh air.

By chance, right after she stepped out of the elevator, she bumped into Ronald.

Tracy was surprised. "Why are you here?"

Ronald had been smiling, ready to greet her, but his eyes suddenly caught sight of her swollen, reddened cheeks and the bandage wrapped around her forehead.

His smile disappeared immediately, and he asked, "Who hurt you?"

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The eyes that once had been full of warmth now had a touch of coldness.

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Tracy felt her bad mood strangely lighten after sensing the quiet anger behind his short words.

"If you know who did it, do you still want to take revenge for me?"

She teased, her tone playful and relaxed, as if she wasn't the one who'd been wronged.

Ronald nodded seriously. "Yes! Even if I can't beat them, I'll find another way to get revenge for you."

His sincere answer surprised Tracy, and her forced smile seemed to fade a little.

Honestly, she would have preferred if he'd just said "no" or just ignored it instead of honestly promising revenge even if he knew he couldn't win.

She worried she might start believing him.

Ronald was smart and quick to notice her feelings changing.

He caught the subtle shift in her mood and had a hunch. "Was it that youngest son from the Jackmans in Cloudville last time?"

This was the first time Ronald kept asking even when he saw she didn't want to answer.

Tracy looked at him, and somehow, she found herself answering seriously, "No, it was Andrew Jackman, the CEO of Jackman Enterprise."

Andrew's name was famous in Cloudville for being someone you shouldn't mess with.

She knew she shouldn't share too much with Ronald.

But deep down, she couldn't help but wonder. *He*

sounds so sincere, but how much *of* that sincerity *is real*?

Ronald had been in Cloudville for some time and even earned some money from stocks, so he naturally knew about Jackman Enterprise.

He had definitely heard of Andrew and understood how important the Jackmans were in the city.

Under Tracy's tense, guarded gaze, Ronald rubbed his chin, saying, "If it's him, slapping or

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breaking his head might be a bit difficult."

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Given how things were now, doing something like that wouldn't be smart and could cause problems for Tracy.

Tracy lowered her eyes, thinking, *Just like I*

expected.

She had to admit, for just a moment, she'd actually hoped otherwise... but

"But!" Ronald added with a sly smile, "I'm still sure I can find other ways to get back at him for you, CeeCee."

Tracy looked at him, stunned, like she'd misheard.

Ronald blinked and asked with a teasing smile, "That face—don't tell me you don't believe me?"

Tracy shook off her thoughts, her eyes flickering.

Since Ronald had made hundreds of thousands in such a short time, of course, she believed he was capable, but...

"Right now, you shouldn't go head-to-head with Jackman Enterprise. Don't do anything reckless."

It was just a slap and a hurt head after all. Over the last two years, she had suffered much worse and gotten used to it.

Besides, she didn't care about the Jackmans anymore.

Ronald noticed her worry, and his eyes

lit

1. up.

"CeeCee, are you worried about me?"

Tracy, used to his blunt way of talking, replied calmly, "If you want to think that, go ahead."

After saying this, she walked straight toward the hospital garden.

The sun was shining today, and a bit of sunlight could help lift her mood.

Ronald kept smiling, but as Tracy passed by him, his smile suddenly became cold.

The Jackmans.

Andrew Jackman.

He'd remember those names.

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Ronald quickly smiled again and followed after Tracy.

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He had noticed how distant and tired Tracy seemed when she talked about the Jackmans, and he had figured out her identity.

Since he planned to stay quietly in Cloudville, he'd naturally looked into the local scene—and had heard all about the Jackmans' real or fake daughters scandal from years back.

Putting together Tracy's attitude toward Liam and Andrew, along with some rumors, he could guess her true identity.

Even though she was considered a fake daughter, she was still known as the Jackmans' daughter, so why did she seem so weighed down by life?

She was only in her twenties, but her thoughts felt like those of someone much older, and even

From her, Ronald sensed a trace of world-weariness.

The same kind he kept buried deep inside himself.

Walter had been too busy to visit Tracy since she was admitted to the hospital.

At Tracy's request, her injury and hospital stay were kept secret from Franklin. Meanwhile, Walter was very busy dealing with the investigation of Erin's kidnapping, even though he was getting old.

Fortunately, even though he was getting on in years, his experience working for Franklin still served him well, and within a couple of days, he quickly found out the truth.

While Tracy was in the hospital, Walter used the chance to show the Jackmans evidence about the case.

Tracy's whereabouts weren't a secret, and just asking around would make it clear she had nothing to do with Erin's kidnapping.

But instead of checking, the Jackmans blamed Tracy right away and even used violence against

her.

Walter stared at Andrew with a disappointed look and said, "As the CEO of Jackman Enterprise, making rash and unreasonable decisions just because you want to—aren't you worried people will laugh at you if they find out?"

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What he said was a bit harsh, but that was because he felt angry knowing Tracy was being treated unfairly.

Andrew didn't argue back, not just because he respected Walter, but because he felt guilty about Tracy.

He had acted rashly that day. Not only did he misunderstand Tracy, but he also laid a hand on her, which wasn't right.

At the same time, old memories came to his mind, making him lose control.

If Tracy didn't have a past record, he wouldn't have lost his temper like that.

Noticing the tension, Liam quickly spoke up. "If it wasn't Tracy, then who's behind the kidnapping?"

"We need to find any clues fast so that the person behind this doesn't hurt Erin again."

Benjamin and Daphne also tried to calm things down, pushing to figure out who was really responsible to keep Erin safe.

Andrew stayed quiet but looked relieved. He just wanted to get this whole thing over with.

Walter, watching them, felt even more disappointed with the Jackmans.

"You've said so much but haven't apologized to Ms. Tracy, whom you wrongly accused."

They were so quick to blame her for the kidnapping that she ended up in the hospital.

Now that they knew the truth, they acted like it never happened and didn't mention her at all.

Even a stranger would feel bad in this situation!

Walter's question left the Jackmans speechless.

Seeing this, Erin, who'd been quietly sitting on the couch like a background figure, couldn't stay silent any longer.

"Walter, you've got it wrong. Andrew and the others just want to find the kidnapper first, then they'll apologize to Tracy.

"After all, Tracy got blamed because of that person. I'm sure she wants to know who did it."

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With the perfect way out offered to them, the Jackmans naturally took it.

Liam nodded repeatedly, saying, "Yes, that's exactly what we thought."

Walter, who was older, could see right through their act.

As an outsider, he knew it wasn't right for him to get too involved, so he stayed quiet.

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He pulled out a USB drive and said, "Here is the video of Ms. Jackman's kidnapping. Mr. Andrew, if you want to investigate, then you better get to the bottom of it, so the wrongly accused Ms. Tracy gets the justice she deserves."

Hearing this, the Jackmans looked surprised.

Hadn't they erased the surveillance footage? So why did Walter still have it?

Having worked with the Jackmans for many years, Walter understood exactly why they looked shocked.

After the incident, the Jackmans were busy blaming Tracy, taking care of Erin, deleting surveillance footage, and trying to keep things quiet. No one thought about finding out what really happened.

Since the news could hurt Jackman Enterprise, and they believed they already knew who was responsible, they didn't feel the need to dig deeper.

If Walter hadn't quickly made a backup of the surveillance footage, the Jackmans might have destroyed all the evidence themselves.

Walter knew their shock came from worrying that the surveillance footage might get out and harm the company, so he said, "Don't worry, this is the only copy."

The footage showed Erin being kidnapped into a van. Nothing unusual could be seen, but the license plate was clearly visible.

With the Jackmans' resources, following that lead shouldn't be hard.

Unless, of course, they had no intention of digging deeper.

Erin knew exactly which surveillance video Walter was talking about.

When some old fools forced her out of that rundown area, she spotted a surveillance camera by the roadside.

Not wanting the camera to mess up her perfect appearance, she thought about deleting the

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footage. But at that exact moment, that bastard chose to kidnap her.

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After thinking it over, she figured the camera probably hadn't caught much, and felt a bit. relieved.

What Erin didn't realize was that Walter noticed the small smile on her lips.

He looked at Erin closely for a moment, then glanced at the Jackmans standing nearby, who didn't seem to notice.

"Ms. Jackman, what are you smiling about?"

Walter's question immediately made everyone look at Erin, surprising her so much that she almost lost her calm.

"I ... I'm just glad there's a lead," she said nervously.

She then hid slightly behind Liam, acting scared like Walter had frightened her.

Liam quickly stepped in to shield her, giving Walter a cautious look. "Walter, Erin still hasn't gotten over the kidnapping. Don't scare her."

Walter looked surprised. "Scare her? I only asked a simple question. How did that turn into scaring her?"

Erin waved her hands nervously. "No, Walter didn't scare me. It's just me—I'm still shaken up from the kidnapping."

Her words sounded rehearsed, like she was forced to say them.

Liam stepped closer, shielding her even more protectively.

Walter's face grew serious, his sharp eyes seeming to see right through her.

"So, you're just timid. I thought maybe you felt guilty." His voice was cold and carried a sense of pressure.

Walter had been with Franklin through many tough times, and his strong presence wasn't something just anyone could withstand.

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Liam, who spent most of his time racing cars and had never really fought his way through the business world, stepped back right away under that intense pressure.

Soon after, Andrew stepped forward and stood in front of him.

With a serious look, Andrew faced Walter and said, "Walter, Erin is innocent. You shouldn't

doubt her."

Walter had watched the Jackmans' heir grow up, and Andrew naturally had a certain boldness.

But the confidence Walter once admired now seemed almost ridiculous in his eyes.

“So I’m not supposed to doubt her, but you think it’s right to doubt Ms. Tracy, who grew up with you?”

At that moment, Walter seemed to finally understand why Tracy had been so cold toward the Jackmans since she came back.

He looked *at* Erin, who stayed close to Liam as if she’d been hurt badly, and a sharp glint flickered in his cloudy eyes.

“Ms. Jackman, you don’t need to be so afraid of me. I’m just a retired butler. There’s no reason for you to be that nervous around me.”

After saying this, Walter gave the Jackmans one last glance and walked away.

At first, he planned to give the USB drive to Andrew and leave the situation alone, but now he thought differently.

As an outsider, he shouldn’t get involved with the Jackmans’ issues.

But since Tracy had treated him like her family, Walter had made up his mind to stand by her, and once he decided, he was all in.

When Walter left, the room suddenly became very quiet and heavy,

Erin glanced cautiously at everyone in front of her, her eyes growing watery. “I know Walter doesn’t like me, but why does he have to doubt me?”

“Dad and Mom treat me so well, and I have no reason to steal money from you. How could I plan my own kidnapping?”

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Her words had two meanings—showing she was innocent but also reminding the Jackmans about Tracy’s fake kidnapping in the past.

Her sad look quickly made the Jackmans feel sorry for her, and they gently comforted her, “Erin, don’t take it to heart. Walter likes Tracy and wants to help her, so he’s making things hard for you.”

“Don’t worry, we’re here, and we won’t let anyone treat you badly.”

They didn’t doubt Erin because of what Walter said, but they felt a pang of guilt towards Tracy because of it.

So, even when Erin brought up Tracy’s fake kidnapping to get money, nobody said much about it.

Liam even chimed in, suggesting they might have misunderstood Tracy.

Out of sight, Erin clenched her jaw so tight she could almost crack a silver filling.

What’s *wrong*

with Liam? Why is he suddenly defending Tracy?

To Erin, Liam—the reckless, impulsive idiot—was the easiest person to control.

To keep him on her side, she went to Liam every day with tear-filled, red eyes, telling him about her troubles and fears, and sometimes mentioning that “Tracy didn’t suffer any trauma from the kidnapping.”

She hoped this would make Liam “see through Tracy’s hidden scheming” all over again. But what did he actually think? Not even close.

Liam had promised several times that he’d protect Erin. Seeing her like this, his heart ached with both pain and regret.

Erin’s emotional trauma must be because of what

Walter said.

He needed to find a way to clear up Walter’s doubts. Otherwise, with Erin’s kind and innocent nature, she’d be haunted by it for a long time.

Walter had no idea about any of this.

Even though he gave the surveillance footage to Andrew, he still remembered the license plate number.

Using that clue, he discovered a man named Tom Allen.

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The ransom account given by the kidnappers of Erin just happened to be under the name Tom Allen.

Walter quickly started looking into this man.

Tom wasn't from Cloudville, and it seemed like someone was hiding his background. Walter didn't want to trouble Franklin with these problems, so the investigation was a bit tricky.

Since Walter was old, handling all this was already hard. Just then, Liam came up to him.

"Walter, can you explain why you suspect Erin?"

Walter thought Liam was asking because he also had doubts, until Liam said, "After what you said earlier, Erin has been sad for days, her eyes are swollen from crying, and I hate to see her suffer like this."

Walter frowned, looking at Liam with a tired and cold expression. "Mr. Liam, did you come here today to defend Ms. Jackman?"

Liam didn't dare argue with him and quickly said, "I just want you to apologize to Erin, to tell her you didn't really doubt her, and that it was all a misunderstanding..."

Walter cut him off sharply, "Whether it's a misunderstanding or not, we'll find out when we investigate. If you trust her so much, you should focus on finding the real culprit instead of coming to me without proof."

Walter thought that even if his earlier words couldn't change the Jackmans' attitude toward Tracy, they would at least stir some regret in them.

But now, it seemed like all they ever cared about was Erin.

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Liam was a little annoyed and said, "I don't understand. Why do you suspect Erin without any proof? Why don't you believe her?"

Walter didn't answer right away but calmly replied, "Then why are you suspicious of Ms. Tracy without any proof? Why don't you trust her?"

Walter's disappointed and sharp look hit Liam like a heavy blow.

He vaguely remembered that long ago, he had trusted and relied on Tracy even more than Daphne.

So why was he now doubting Tracy without any proof?

Seeing Liam's confused expression, Walter sighed deeply. "Mr. Liam, after Ms. Jackman's kidnapping, you spent your time blaming Ms. Tracy, hiding the news, and taking care of Ms. Jackman. Why didn't you think carefully?

"The Jackmans sent many bodyguards to protect Ms. Jackman. So why did she suddenly send them away? Why was she found in that old district?"

Liam stood still, unable to speak for a while.

He might not be the sharpest, but he wasn't totally clueless either. *Why have I never thought*

of these questions?

For the first time, he didn't rush to defend Erin after she said she'd been wronged. Instead, he started quietly looking into the matter.

Tracy had no idea about this.

Only after her facial injury healed did she visit Franklin in the hospital.

Since she was busy with the birthday party plans, Tracy didn't need to explain why she had been gone so long.

After seeing Franklin, she was coming down the stairs to leave when she saw a familiar figure.

"Professor Dinwiddie?"

The woman in the wheelchair, looking pale and upset, was Phoebe Dinwiddie.

Tracy hurried over and asked with worry, "Professor Dinwiddie, what happened to you?"

The last time they met, she looked fine. How did she get so worn out now?

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When Phoebe saw her, her face brightened a little, but she shook her head with a small smile, saying, "I'm fine."

Tracy didn't believe her because she looked very pale and weak.

She glanced at the woman standing behind the wheelchair. The woman looked about the same age as Phoebe and had a slight resemblance to her. Tracy looked at her with curiosity.

The woman smiled warmly and nodded in greeting. "You must be my mom's student, right? I'm Trina Kirkland. My mom just has a minor health problem, nothing serious."

Hearing that, Tracy felt a bit relieved, but she was still worried.

Phoebe noticed Tracy's worry and quickly changed the topic. "Tracy, why are you here at the hospital?"

"I came to see my grandpa," Tracy said, sitting down and holding Phoebe's hand. She was about to say more.

But just as she started talking, Trina suddenly grabbed her and pulled her up. "You're Tracy Yarwood?"

The friendly and kind tone she had before turned cold and harsh, full of anger.

Tracy was surprised by how she acted, not really sure what was going on.

Trina pulled her hand away gently but was clearly upset, saying, "Go away, I don't want to see you!"

Tracy frowned, confused, "We haven't met before. Maybe there's some kind of misunderstanding?"

Trina looked cautious and angry, "Misunderstanding? My mom got punished at college because of you, and she..."

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"Trina!" Phoebe interrupted suddenly, her voice firm.

After all these years teaching, she carried a natural authority—just one sharp word from her shut Trina up instantly.

But she still looked at Tracy with anger.

Phoebe smiled and held Tracy's hand. "She has some misunderstandings about you.

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attention to her."

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Tracy noticed Trina was still upset but didn't say anything more. She guessed it was more than just a misunderstanding.

She talked with Phoebe a little longer to make sure she was okay, then said goodbye and left.

The whole time, she ignored what Trina had said earlier and didn't bring it up.

That only made Trina, already angry, even more furious, and a part of her still felt wronged on behalf of her mother.

But what surprised her was that after she arranged for Phoebe's hospital stay, she ran into Tracy again as she stepped outside.

It looked like Tracy was waiting for her, greeting her right when she came out.

Trina's face quickly grew icy. "Why are you here?"

Tracy didn't get upset by her cold tone and went straight to ask, "What did you mean earlier when you said Professor Dinwiddie got in trouble at college because of me?"

"You don't know?" Trina was shocked for a second, then got even angrier.

Her mother had given up chances in her career for this person, and yet

Trina stared at Tracy, silent for a long time.

she was clueless!

It was her mother's decision, and no matter what, she had to respect it.

“Just go. I don’t want to see you.” Trina said coldly, not wanting to say anything more, and walked off.

But Tracy held her hand tightly, saying, “I really want to understand what happened.”

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“In college, Professor Dinwiddie was the one who helped me. She’s the person I admire the most. When everyone else thought I cheated, she was the only one who trusted me.

“I need to find out why she got in trouble because of me.”

Tracy’s tone was honest and determined, even a little begging.

Trina looked at her, her eyes slowly filling with tears.

Phoebe had told her not to talk about these things around Tracy, but she knew she felt wronged!

“You want to know why? Fine, I’ll tell you!”

Trina turned around, her eyes full of anger aimed at Tracy. “It’s because she always believed you didn’t plagiarize. My mom went everywhere trying to find videos and pictures.

“Whether it showed you directly or anything you’d used, she bought everything—no matter the price—as long as it was connected to you.

“Because of that, someone reported her for bothering students. She lost all her titles and almost got kicked out of college. Everyone there was gossiping, calling her a pervert who’s into girls and has some kind of weird obsession.”

By the time she said the last part, Trina couldn’t hold back her tears anymore.

Her mother’s reputation and future were completely destroyed because of this!

Tracy turned pale.

She let go of Trina’s hand and stepped back, unsteady.

She really didn’t know... She had no idea.

When everyone accused her of plagiarism, she was desperate and saw Phoebe as her last hope. She begged her to trust her and find evidence to clear her name.

Later, when the Jackmans suddenly sent her to the Angelic Etiquette Academy, she thought no one cared about her anymore, and she had lost everything, not knowing someone was still fighting for her.

That person risked her own future and reputation just because she believed in her.

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Trina wiped her tears away, "My mom went to the hospital because of you. She was ready to let it go,

but when she saw you again, she caused trouble at college, and that's what made this happen.

"I'm begging you, if you truly respect her the most, then don't show up in front of her again!"

Every word felt like a sharp pain in Tracy's chest, making it hard for her to breathe.

But Trina didn't feel sorry for her at all. She pushed Tracy away angrily.

Honestly, even if she didn't, Tracy would have been too ashamed to face Phoebe.

Giving up her reputation and future for someone like her wasn't worth it at all.

She needed to find a way to clear Phoebe's name!

Right now, Tracy didn't have much power, so she could only try asking Walter for help.

But after trying several times, she couldn't find him because Walter had just found an important lead.

Even though Tom wasn't from Cloudville, Walter's skills made it easy to track down information about him.

Tom lost his father when he was ten and went to live with his mother after she got married again. He used to be lazy,, selfish, and spend a lot of time gambling. People in the neighborhood knew him as a troublemaker.

This useless and uneducated guy suddenly got rich about four years ago.

He didn't run a business *or* win the lottery, but every month, there was a sum of money deposited into his account.

The account sending money to him was opened by the Jackmans for Erin.

The very first transfer happened right when Erin returned to live with the Jackmans.

At first, the amount was 10,000, then it grew to 30,000, then 50,000, and finally reached 100,000.

About two years ago, the money transfers suddenly stopped.

This happened shortly after Tracy was "sent abroad."

With all these coincidences, Walter wasn't buying it. He immediately ordered a deeper

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investigation.

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The investigation showed that Erin would withdraw cash from the bank every few months- sometimes a few hundred thousand, other times over a million.

Nobody knew where the money went, but after a few days, Tom would get a large amount of

money.

Some of it went into the bank, but most was spent or lost gambling.

Walter, who was very careful and thorough, had someone check Tom's spending. They found that the amount of money he received was the same as the amount of cash Erin took out.

Also, every few months, Tom's phone number would call Erin's number.

All these clues showed there was a secret between Tom and Erin.

Walter quickly followed this hint but couldn't discover anything more.

It looked like, besides this link, there was nothing else connecting them.

The less he found, the more doubtful he became.

The Jackmans, being one of the top wealthy families in Cloudville, wouldn't just accept anyone claiming kinship with a simple paternity test.

When Erin suddenly showed up, the Jackmans immediately checked her background thoroughly.

Walter had seen those reports, and there was no sign of any connection to Tom.

Also, the details he got about Tom now looked thorough and detailed on the surface, but when it came to his own family, it was all just superficial digging.

If it were another person, maybe they wouldn't catch this small detail.

But Walter, who had worked closely with Franklin for many years, definitely wasn't someone who could be easily tricked.

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The information seemed flawless but was actually shallow, showing that someone was purposely hiding something.

It looked like he needed to go to Tom's hometown himself.

"Walter?"

A familiar voice suddenly brought Walter out of his thoughts.

He quickly put away what he was holding and looked up with a gentle, loving smile at Tracy, who had quietly come in without him noticing.

Tracy saw what he was holding and asked with interest, "Walter, what are you looking at?"

She had noticed Walter's serious mood earlier and tried calling him several times, but he didn't hear.

The matter wasn't settled yet, so Walter naturally didn't want her to worry over it.

But just as he was about to speak, he suddenly recalled that Erin had been in contact with Tom soon after returning to the Jackmans, and the family's attitude towards Tracy changed at that time.

Later, the money transfers between Erin and Tom changed from bank transfers to cash, which happened when Tracy was abroad.

Walter didn't think that was a coincidence.

Thinking quickly, he asked, "Ms. Tracy, do you know anyone named Tom Allen?"

Tracy shook her head, confused. "No, I don't know him."

Seeing Walter's serious look, she asked, "What's wrong?"

He hesitated for a moment but decided to speak up about the suspicious activities between

Tom and Erin.

There were many money transfers between them, yet Tom still kidnapped Erin, which made it seem like the kidnapping might have been staged.

If that was true, Erin was not as simple as he first thought.

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Before, he believed Erin had a clean background and was just a little suspicious and jealous.

Since the Jackmans were blindly loyal, it explained why Tracy kept getting hurt.

Now it seemed that both he and Franklin might have been wrong. Erin was definitely more complicated than they thought, and he needed to warn Tracy.

When Tracy heard that, she immediately remembered the time she accidentally overheard Erin on the phone being threatened with five million dollars.

The ransom for Erin's recent kidnapping was also five million.

Could this really just be a coincidence?

Tracy didn't keep it to herself and quickly told Walter about what she had heard.

This made Walter even more sure that Erin was involved in something suspicious, and he decided to look into Tom more closely to find the truth.

But since he still didn't know much about Tom, he chose not to tell Tracy everything yet.

"Just act like you don't know anything for now, and don't tell anyone. I will check everything carefully and make sure no one messes with you."

Hearing this, Tracy felt a mix of gratitude and warmth.

"Thank you,

Walter."

Having practically grown up around Walter, she knew exactly what kind of person he was.

Although the Jackmans had long treated him like one of their own, he always stuck to his role and never crossed any lines over the years.

But now, he was breaking the principles he'd held for decades to help her.

Walter gave a kind smile, saying, "You said I'm your family, so why are you thanking me?"

He lightly tapped her nose and said, "When you were young and upset, you'd run over and hold onto my legs, wanting me to solve things for you, looking like a cheeky little smarty.

"Now that you've grown up, why are you acting so formal with me?"

Walter had been with Franklin his entire life, never married and without kids, so he didn't have any grandchildren.

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, **Sep 6 B...**

Chapter 97 I'll Have Your Back

Tracy, who had always been affectionate and sweet since she was a child, felt like a real granddaughter to him.

Because of this, he could never stand to see Tracy being treated unfairly.

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Tracy understood how much Walter cared and playfully grabbed his arm, saying, "I won't be formal with you. From now on, if I ever get wronged, I want you to stand up for me."

Walter laughed and agreed, "Okay, I'll have your back. No one's going to mess with you on my watch."

Walter was a man of his word, so he was determined to get to the bottom of Tom's issues.

However, to visit Tom's hometown himself, he had to trick Franklin first. He didn't want to cause him any extra pain by letting him know.

Even though Walter didn't have any children, he had supported many kids over time.

He told Franklin that he planned to visit two of the children he supported.

Walter checked on these kids from time to time, so Franklin didn't suspect anything.

Franklin quickly approved his time off, saying, "You've spent most of your life running around after me, never settling down. You should travel more and not just stick with me, this half-dead old man."

Walter cheerfully poured him some water and said, "Who says I don't have a family? I've spent most of my life with you. Doesn't that make me your family?"

"Sure, sure, you're my family." Franklin laughed. "But you've been calling me Mr. Franklin for half your life. When are you going to treat me as your older brother?"

Walter gave him the cup of water with a playful eye roll. "You're only a couple of weeks older than me. What's there *to* brag about?"

"If you want me to treat you as my old brother, you'll have to wait forever!"

Walter was usually formal and polished in public. Only around Franklin did he act so relaxed and easygoing.

Chapter 98 An Envelope

Chapter 98 An Envelope

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Franklin leaned back and asked, "Hey, old thing, we've been stubborn with each other for half our lives. What's so bad about letting me be your big brother for once?"

"I'll be the one who's reborn first," he added with a grin. "So even in our next life, I'll still be your big brother."

Walter rolled his eyes. "In your dreams. For all you know, I might get reborn first, and then I'll be your big brother."

By the time he said that last line, there was a spark of playful anticipation in his eyes.

Franklin grabbed the pillow behind him and lobbed it at Walter. "Your dreams are bigger than mine! You're way healthier than I am. Who knows, maybe I'll just drop dead one day—don't be too sad when it happens."

"Knock on wood!" Walter quickly tossed the pillow back. "Don't talk nonsense like that!"

Franklin chuckled, unfazed, and let the matter drop.

Walter had grown up in the mountains. The only reason he'd made it through school and into college was that Franklin had paid his way.

After graduating, Walter went straight to work at Jackman Enterprise, staying by Franklin's side ever since.

They had weathered countless hardships together, building a friendship far deeper than an ordinary boss-and-employee relationship. Teasing each other had become second nature, and neither took those words to heart.

But neither of them could have guessed that fate loved to play cruel jokes—and that one offhand remark might one day come true.

After saying goodbye to Franklin and promising to be back in time for his birthday, Walter set off for Tom's hometown.

Before leaving, though, he handed Tracy a folder.

The last time Tracy had come to him, she'd asked for help looking into Phoebe's situation. He had found something, and along with the information, he gave her another envelope.

Tracy took it straight to the school.

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Walking through the gates again, the familiar yet distant campus made her feel like she'd stepped into another lifetime.

She had earned her place at this school through her merit, walking in on her first day full of dreams and hope. But two years ago, she'd gotten a phone call from Norris, rushed out in excitement, and never came back.

It took her a while to shake off the heaviness in her chest. Then she headed toward the principal's office.

Just as she reached for the door, it swung open from the inside.

Before she could react, someone was shoved out. She caught the person instinctively, but the force made her stumble back two steps.

Once she steadied herself, she realized it was Phoebe's daughter, Trina Kirkland.

Trina didn't even glance back. She rushed to the door and blocked it from closing, not caring if her hand got caught.

Inside, the bespectacled principal, Kellen Schmidt, looked at her with a mix of anger and exasperation. "I've told you many times, the matter with Phoebe is already finalized. The notice has been sent out. Coming to me won't change anything."

Trina's eyes were red, but her voice was stubborn. "You know my mom is innocent. Why would you fire her?"

"If you hadn't lied to her and destroyed all the evidence she had, she wouldn't have gotten so upset that she fell sick."

Kellen didn't flinch. His tone was cold, even cruel. "If you want to blame someone, blame Phoebe herself. She should've let things go, but she just had to stir them up again."

"Trina, dragging this out will only make her look more like a joke..."

"That's an awful thing *to* say," Tracy cut in, her face hard. "Professor Dinwiddie is a respected educator. The only ones who should be laughed at are the people who wronged her."

Trina finally remembered that someone else was behind her. When she turned and saw Tracy, her resentment flared even stronger.

She narrowed her eyes, not hiding the dislike in her expression, but she didn't speak.

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However, Kellen looked at Tracy with curiosity. "And you are..."

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He thought she seemed familiar, but with so many students passing through every day, it was impossible to remember them all.

Tracy stepped closer. "My name's Tracy Yarwood. I used to be a student here."

She didn't think she was well-known enough for Kellen to remember her, but the slight change in his expression told her otherwise.

He clearly remembered her—and not in a casual way.

Instead of asking who she was, he went straight to, “What brings you here?”

Tracy kept her voice steady as she glanced at Trina, who still had a stormy look on her face. “I’m here about Professor Dinwiddie.”

Kellen’s expression darkened. “This is a school matter. It’s already over, and it doesn’t concern outsiders like you.”

He started to close the door on them.

But before it shut, Tracy wedged the envelope between the door and the frame. “I don’t think you’d want more people seeing what’s in here.”

There was a quiet threat in her voice. Kellen bristled, but when his eyes met hers, his anger stalled.

After a pause, he took the envelope and opened it.

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Chapter

99 Dirt

Chapter 99 Dirt

The moment Kellen saw what was inside, his face changed.

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He snapped the folder shut and stared at Tracy, his voice tight. “Where did you get this?”

Tracy didn’t answer. “Now, can we talk about Professor Dinwiddie?”

Kellen’s jaw tightened. He hesitated, but in the end, he spoke.

Trina glanced at Tracy in surprise.

She didn’t want anything to do with the person who had ruined Phoebe’s life.

But for two years, there had been no progress in Phoebe’s case. Even today was the first time she had ever made it into the principal’s office.

After a brief pause, she stepped inside, too.

Kellen shut the door and faced Tracy again. “Where did you get you get this?”

Inside the folder were years of proof—bribes, kickbacks, and shady deals that Kellen had taken part in. If it ever got out, everything he had would be destroyed.

Tracy wasn’t about to tell him her source. “What exactly happened to Professor Dinwiddie?”

Even when facing Kellen, she showed no respect.

Because Kellen didn’t deserve it.

His expression darkened. “Tracy, your plagiarism case was two years ago. Whatever’s going on with Phoebe has nothing to do with you.”

His voice softened, almost coaxing. “Most of the people who knew about your case have graduated. If you just pretend you don’t know about this, I can get you back in school.”

Trina’s anger flared. “What do you mean it has nothing to do with her? If it weren’t for her, my Mom wouldn’t be like this!”

She glared at Tracy. “I thought you came to help my Mom. Turns out you’re just here to use her to get something for yourself. Tracy, if you dare take his deal, I’ll never let you off!”

Kellen relaxed a little, looking sure of himself. “This is between me and her. Keep pushing, and I’ll have you thrown out.”

Chapter 99 Dirt

“You ...” Trina’s cheeks flushed red. The fight in her turned to a heavy, helpless feeling.

Tracy suddenly stepped in front of her.

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“Mr. Schmidt, you’re overthinking it. I just want to know what happened to Professor Dinwiddie. I have zero interest in coming back to a school that can’t tell right from wrong and falsely accused me.”

Her back looked small and thin, but her stance was unshakable.

Trina's eyes burned. She had been running herself ragged trying to help Phoebe, but no one had been willing to stand with her. She had been on the edge of losing hope.

Now, seeing Tracy stand firm in front of her felt like a crack breaking open in the wall she had been holding up for so long.

She knew she couldn't put all the blame on Tracy—but the truth was, Phoebe had ended up like this because of her.

Tracy's gaze was sharp on Kellen. "Why was Professor Dinwiddie fired?"

Trina had told her before. Phoebe had been disciplined two years ago because of her, and this recent trip to the hospital was also because of her.

Her humiliating past should never have dragged an innocent person down with her.

However, Kellen hesitated for a long time, unable to find the words.

"He won't tell you. I will," Trina said suddenly.

Her

eyes dropped, long lashes hiding the emotions in them.

"Two years ago, when my Mom was helping you find proof, she bought student life videos and photos from all over the place. Someone sent an anonymous report about it. Because of her record and the awards she'd earned, the school didn't fire her—just gave her a warning.

"It would've all blown over, but then my Mom saw you again a while back and dug out those photos and videos. She found the proof she'd been looking for. She was so happy. She took it to the school and asked them to reopen the case. Mr. Schmidt here even promised her he would, swearing he'd have an answer soon."

Trina's eyes turned red as she pointed at Kellen, her voice sharp. "But instead, he destroyed the evidence and issued a public statement saying my Mom didn't have the behavior or professionalism a teacher should have. That's why she was fired. She was so upset, she's still in the hospital!"

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Kellen's face was stiff. Being accused to his face made him angry, but he couldn't deny it- because everything Trina said was true.

Now Tracy understood, and heat rose in her chest. "Who made the anonymous report?"

If it had been just a random tip-off, the school would have investigated. They wouldn't have immediately destroyed the evidence and fired the one person who knew the truth.

Which meant someone had been pulling the strings.

Kellen's expression flickered.

He didn't want to reveal the person behind it, but Tracy had too much dirt on him.

After a long pause, he gave in. "It was Winona."

Tracy's heart clenched.

She had always thought Winona simply disliked her and that their disagreements were nothing more than petty fights. She had never imagined Winona would go this far, pushing Phoebe to the brink.

Her hands curled into fists. A dark, destructive urge surged inside her.

Chapter 100 Apology

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Ever since Tracy came back from the Angelic Etiquette Academy, she has made a habit of avoiding trouble. She gave way when she could and tried to live quietly.

But some people just wouldn't leave her alone.

Winona must have forgotten they grew up together and that Tracy had once been the most spoiled daughter of the Jackmans.

Which meant Tracy knew all of Winona's dirty secrets better than anyone.

Keeping her emotions in check, Tracy looked coldly at Kellen. "I believe you know Professor Dinwiddie is innocent-just like I know you're innocent."

As she spoke, she let her gaze drift to the folder still clutched in his hand.

Winona was an optional bargaining chip. Tracy was a threat Kellen couldn't afford to ignore. He knew which choice he had to make.

And Tracy had no intention of letting Winona go unpunished.

Nobody liked being threatened, least of all someone like Kellen, who had been in a position of power for years.

He couldn't refuse her, but he wouldn't take it lying down either.

As soon as Tracy left, he picked up the phone and called Winona.

Sometimes you could have both the stick and the carrot.

Tracy and Trina walked out of the principal's office without speaking.

It wasn't until they reached the front gate and Tracy was about to call a cab that a voice came from behind her. "Why didn't you take Mr. Schmidt's deal?"

Trina didn't know what was in that folder, but she could tell Kellen was scared of it. If Tracy wanted, she could not only return to school but maybe even clear her name.

Instead, she had refused—and all she'd asked for was to prove Phoebe's innocence.

To Trina, it felt like too much of a loss.

Tracy stopped and turned toward her, seeing the conflict in Trina's face.

Chapter 100 Apology

"Professor Dinwiddie got dragged into this because of me. My mistakes shouldn't cost someone else their future."

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If she had seen the truth on her 18th birthday, if she hadn't clung to the illusion of family affection, maybe she and Phoebe wouldn't have suffered the way they did.

Trina hadn't expected that answer.

Deep down, she had always known Phoebe's situation wasn't entirely Tracy's fault. Still, after Phoebe was targeted, she'd tried countless ways to reach Tracy, hoping she would speak up and clear things up.

But Tracy had vanished—gone overseas to enjoy herself, leaving Phoebe to fend for herself.

That was why Trina's heart had been full of anger, helplessness, and resentment.

Yet in this moment, she truly felt Tracy's guilt and her desire to make things right.

"Why did you leave without a word back then?" Trina asked quietly. "If you'd been here, my Mom wouldn't have been so alone."

Tracy's chest tightened. Her clenched fists trembled. "I'm sorry..."

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"That's not what I want to hear," Trina pressed. "Why didn't you show up?"

Unwanted memories flashed in Tracy's mind, and her face went pale. Her voice was hoarse. "I'm sorry..."

She didn't know what else to say.

She couldn't tell anyone what had happened to her at the Angelic Etiquette Academy. Not only would it endanger them, but it would put her in danger too.

Living or dying didn't matter to her.

But she had been dragged out of that place by people who risked their lives for her, so she had no choice but to keep living.

Trina felt a wave of helplessness and anger.

She could tell Tracy was hiding something, but all she had wanted was an explanation. She didn't understand why Tracy couldn't give her even that.

Trina took a deep breath. "What's done is done. Do you think an apology will fix it? What if I stabbed you and just said sorry afterward—would that make it okay?"

Tracy couldn't argue with that. She stayed silent.

The silence made Trina even angrier.

Afraid she might lash out, she shot Tracy one last glare and stormed off.

Phoebe had been slandered for two years, nearly losing her career, and now she couldn't even get an explanation. Trina couldn't accept that.

Tracy knew Trina wanted an answer—but the one thing she couldn't give was the one thing Trina needed. And she wasn't going to lie to Phoebe either.

This was all her debt to Phoebe. If she ever had the chance, she would pay it back. For now, the only thing she could do was clear Phoebe's name.

Just as Tracy expected, Kellen had no choice but to give in to her threat. He withdrew the termination notice, erased the disciplinary record from two years ago, and even issued a statement saying Phoebe had been falsely accused.

When Trina brought the news to the hospital, Phoebe's first reaction was to grab Trina's hand.

She was excited. "What about the evidence I found? If Mr. Schmidt admits I was wronged, has he reopened the investigation into Tracy's plagiarism case?"

Looking at Phoebe—so quick to forget her health and worry about someone else—Trina felt a mix of frustration and helplessness.

"Mom, why do you have to help Tracy? She's not worth it."

Phoebe's excitement faded into calm.

She knew Trina never approved of her running around on Tracy's behalf. They had argued about it more than once.