

## They picked the wrong girl

### Chapter 8

I pulled out a recorder from my purse and calmly pressed play.

Regina's voice came out first. "She's so easy. She will give in to whoever confesses to her first. Then, it would be the time to take her

virginity."

Then Jim's voice followed. "A girl like that submits the second you toss her a little kindness. The real fun is trapping her in deep, then

dropping the truth on her."

Regina replied, "We agreed that whoever wins will get..."

The recording cut off right there.

Jim's face turned ghostly white in an instant.

"You're right," I said quietly, "I'm not clean. How could I be, after being handled by people like you?"

Eric looked more shaken than I expected.

His eyes were bloodshot as he stared at the two of them, voice trembling when he muttered, "Regina, Jim, what the hell were you saying..."

Jim's eyes were locked on the recorder.

He had not realized I had also returned to the orphanage that day.

I had recorded every single word of that disgusting conversation between him and Regina.

Regina panicked and stammered, "N-No, that's not me. It must be AI-generated..."

I lightly brushed my thumb across the recorder and asked, "Want me to play the full version? Including the part where you two talked about getting me drunk and how to divide up the 'prize'?"

Leon's hand around mine suddenly tightened.

However, his voice was still cool and steady, “Darling, shall we call the cops?”

The moment he said that, it was like someone had dropped a bomb.

“Jenny!”

Sherman lunged forward and grabbed my hand. “They were just messing around. They didn’t do anything. Don’t...”

Jim’s voice cracked, sounding almost desperate. “I—  
I stopped it in the end! I didn’t mean it that way...”

I looked at them all with a calm, detached expression.

“Starting today, I—Jen Anderson—have nothing to do with any of you.”

Their faces froze as if time had stopped.

I held onto Leon’s hand and got into the car without so much as a glance back.

Just as the door shut, I heard the unmistakable crash of shattering glass behind me.

Eric had smashed the window of the hospital’s security booth.

**22.115.**

09.1600

That was just like him.

Always defaulting to violence.

His mom had died under his dad’s fists.

He was only six when he witnessed the entire thing from the closet.

After that, no one in the family dared to take him in. “Violent blood. runs in his veins,” they said.

When he was sent to Twinkle Orphanage, he  
was like a feral little beast, snapping at anyone who came near.

At least I could still imagine that maybe—just maybe—  
my parents had their reasons for leaving me.

So I tried to understand him.

Every time he lost control, I would throw myself in front of him. I would apologize to the dean and the other kids, then quietly pick up the mess he left behind.

I still remember when I was nine, I apologized to Mrs. Hemingway yet again. "I'm sorry," I said, "he lost control again."

Then I bent down to clean.

Then, because I glanced at Eric, I cut my finger on the glass.

He stared at the blood on the floor, eyes wild and vacant. "Get lost! I don't need your fake pity!"

Yet, I stayed.

## Chapter B

The next day, I came back with a Band-Aid. When he shoved me to the ground the third time, his eyes turned red.

"Why?"

"Because..." I dusted off my scraped knees. "You broke public property. Someone has to clean it up."

He froze for a second before laughing.

That was the first time I had seen him smile since arriving at the orphanage.

Little by little, he started opening up, blending into this messy, patched-together family of ours

And later, he showed insane talent in e-sports.

When he signed his first big contract, he donated the entire check to an anti-domestic violence foundation.

"Okay," I said, slipping the part-time wages I had saved into his backpack, "let's go eat."

His eyes went red again as he said hoarsely, "I'll pay you back double someday."

He really did start to heal.

Yet, it does not concern me anymore.

There was no love left between us. Not even friendship.

The next time he lashes out and breaks things, I will not be the one apologizing to him.

## **09.16**

### Chapter B

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Leon was actually a little caught off guard.

After all, back when our parents arranged for us to meet, I had been pretty distant toward him.

Yet, this was the first time I reached out and held his hand.

“Want to go home or stop by the City Hall?” he asked in a soft voice, fingers brushing gently over the ring on my finger.

“City Hall,” I replied, resting my head against his shoulder.

In the rearview mirror, the three of them were still standing there.

However, I closed my eyes, not looking back.