

The Heiress Revived from the Ashes

The Heiress Revived 401

Chapter 401 Strangers in the Rain

He wore a carefree smile on his lips, the kind Lauren would often give, and looked completely relaxed and unrushed.

“You got in the wrong car. So why haven’t you gotten out?”

Mia gritted her teeth. “Sir, my friend’s wedding is today. I’m really about to be late. Could you please take me to Cloud Palace? I promise—I’ll pay for the ride.”

So he had guessed correctly. She really was a friend of the Mavis girl.

Josh didn’t say anything. He just started the engine.

Mia let out a breath of relief. The man didn’t seem particularly easygoing, but it turned out he wasn’t hard to reason **with** either.

“Thank you,” she said softly.

Josh suddenly spoke. “How exactly are you planning to thank me?”

“Huh?” Mia froze. She’d expected him to wave it off with a “no problem,” not turn around and ask her how she planned to thank him.

“Well then, sir, how would you like me to thank you?”

“I haven’t figured it out yet. Why don’t you add me on Facebook? I’ll let you know when I do.”

Add him on Facebook?

Mia wasn’t too keen on adding strangers.

Her Facebook only had her mom, Lauren, and a few professors and colleagues from the research institute.

As for irrelevant people—there were none.

“What? You don’t want to?” Josh glanced at her briefly, his eyes cool—very much like his boss’s usual cold demeanor.

“No, no. I will.” Mia hesitated, then gave in.

If he hadn't agreed to give her a ride, she probably would've missed Lauren's wedding entirely.

Josh felt a wave of unexpected happiness at her agreement.

He couldn't even explain it himself—just seeing this girl made him feel a strange kind of affection.

He wasn't the type to go out of his way for strangers. If it had been any other woman, he would've kicked her out, rain or not.

But this girl—Mia—he'd only looked at her once, and he felt like he'd known her forever.

Sure, she was pretty, but nothing so striking as to be unforgettable.

Working beside his boss for years, Josh had met more beautiful women than he could count. Even top celebrities—he'd seen plenty during business meetings.

But never before had anyone made him want to add them on Facebook, just to be able to contact them anytime.

Was this what people called love at first sight?

Josh couldn't quite figure it out. But he didn't stress over it. He just followed his instincts.

The black Maybach cut through the rain like an arrow, speeding toward Cloud Palace Hotel.

When the car stopped, Mia reached for the door handle.

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Chapter 401 Strangers in the Rain.

“Wait,” Josh said suddenly.

Mia looked at him, confused. Her skin was pale, her white t-shirt and ponytail gave her a fresh, youthful vibe.

Josh was momentarily dazed by her appearance—but only for a second. He quickly recovered.

He picked up an umbrella. "It's pouring outside. You'll get soaked without this."

He handed it to her.

It was such a simple, ordinary gesture—but both of them froze.

Outside, the rain came down hard. Inside the car, the two of them locked eyes as he handed her a black umbrella.

And in that instant, a strange image flashed through both their minds.

Mia's pupils trembled.

What *was that*?

+8 Pearls

For a split second, she felt like this had happened before. But no matter how hard she tried, her mind went blank—she couldn't remember when or where.

Josh felt the exact same way.

That strange familiarity again. What was going on?

He took a deep breath, snapped out of it, and saw Mia still sitting there dazed.

He opened the umbrella, got out first, and walked around to the passenger side.

"Come on. I'll walk you in."

Mia looked up at him. He was tall and lean, his long legs accentuated by his fitted suit. When he looked down at her with those serious eyes, her heart skipped a beat.

She quickly looked away. Could it be that she hadn't dated anyone in years, and now, after seeing a handsome man, she couldn't stop herself from catching feelings?

She must be love-starved—falling for a complete stranger after just one meeting.

Clearly, it was time she took a break from research and allowed herself to experience something different—like falling in love.

Mia gave Josh a small smile. "Thank you."

Under one umbrella, the two of them walked together into the hotel.

Send Gifts

Chapter 402 A Bouquet for the Right Person

Once they entered the hotel, the two of them went their separate ways,

Josh stopped in place and looked back at Mia's retreating figure.

No matter how many times he looked at her, there was something about this girl that felt strangely familiar.

He took a deep breath. Whatever—it was the CEO's wedding today. He'd find this Miss Shen after the ceremony was over.

In the dressing room, Marilyn rushed over and grabbed Mia anxiously. "Child, why are you only just getting here? There's less than half an hour left! Lauren's wedding is about to start, and you're her bridesmaid."

"There was an emergency at the institute. I came as soon as I could."

"Alright, alright. Hurry and get into your dress."

Marilyn pulled out the bridesmaid gown and helped Mia change.

Just as she finished, a flamboyantly dressed man in heavy makeup sashayed over in a dress.

Holding his fingers in a delicate pose, he asked, "You must be Miss Mia?"

Mia nodded. "And you are...?"

"I'm Andy—the head stylist for the wedding. No time to waste, let's get started"

Andy wasn't just Balewood's best stylist—he was famous all across Corwynale.

In just fifteen minutes, Mia's makeup was done.

Looking at herself in the mirror, Mia was stunned. The difference between her bare face and her made-up appearance was night and day.

She'd never worn makeup before.

In school, she'd been too focused on her studies.

After entering the research institute, she'd been busy with her work.

This was her first time wearing makeup. She never knew she could look this stunning.

“Mom, let’s go.”

Mia stood and headed toward the ceremony hall with Marilyn.

But just as they stepped outside, Mia wasn’t watching where she was going and ran straight into a tall, firm chest.

Still unsteady in her heels, she lost her balance and stumbled backward.

In that moment, a strong arm wrapped around her slender waist and pulled her into an embrace.

Mia’s eyes widened as she looked up.

Of course—it was him. The man who had driven her to the hotel earlier.

As she looked at Josh, he was looking right back at her.

There was a flash of awe in Josh’s eyes. His arm around her waist tightened instinctively.

Mia immediately noticed the pressure and snapped back to her senses, pushing him away.

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Chapter 402 A Bouquet for the Right Person

“Th—thank you.”

Josh smiled. “Come on. The ceremony’s about to start.”

Mia made it just in time.

When Lauren saw her, her eyes lit up with joy.

“Mia, you made it.”

Mia grinned from ear to ear. It all felt like a dream.

Since she was young, Lauren had always been her idol—the goal she chased in life.

+8 Pearls

Now it felt like she had truly reached that goal. Not only had she been accepted into the same university as Lauren, but she'd even joined the same research institute. And now, she was lucky enough to attend Lauren's wedding.

Lauren was the biggest turning point in her life.

Before meeting Lauren, she'd just been an ordinary girl.

But the moment she saw her on TV, it was like someone had unblocked her path forward. Suddenly, everything became clear.

Her eyes curved into crescents as she smiled. "Lauren, congratulations on your wedding."

Lauren reached out and gently touched her face.

So good. In this life, Mia's future was smooth and bright. She no longer had to suffer for Lauren's sake. She wouldn't be driven to kill, or carry someone else's burdens.

"Mia. I'm going to toss my bouquet to you later. You'd better catch it."

She wanted to share her happiness with Mia.

In their past life, Mia had protected her without hesitation.

In this life, she would do the same for Mia.

"Okay." Mia nodded earnestly, though she didn't know why—but seeing Lauren in her white gown, looking so happy, made her want to cry a little! There was a strange sense of relief, like a weight lifted from her chest.

Rayne pouted. "Lauren, you're playing favorites! I'm not married either. Why aren't you tossing the bouquet to me?"

Lauren just smiled and said nothing.

It wasn't the same. Marilyn and Mia held a place in her heart closer than even family.

"With that, let us welcome the bride and groom!" the host announced, and the doors of the hall slowly opened.

Under the watchful eyes of the country's elites and luminaries, Lauren and Felix made their vows to one another.

They exchanged rings and embraced in a kiss.

In this lifetime, everything was beautiful. Everything had fallen into place.

Chapter 403 The Trickster Groomer

Josh sat at his table, eyes fixed on Mia the entire time.

He couldn't help but pull out his phone and record everything she did.

When Lauren tossed the bouquet and Mia caught it, her whole face lit up with joy—she practically sparkled with happiness.

Josh stared, a little dazed.

She wasn't the most stunning woman he'd ever seen, but something about her was magnetic—undeniably alluring

The wedding was lavish. Everyone present was in great spirits, drinking freely.

Mia drank quite a bit too.

It was her first time drinking. Her cheeks were flushed bright pink, and she swayed unsteadily on her feet.

She staggered toward the restroom.

Her **steps** were wobbly—she looked like she could fall at any moment.

“These heels are awful,” she muttered, clearly annoyed.

Then she kicked them off altogether.

Barefoot, she stepped onto the cold marble floor with her pale, delicate feet.

Josh saw her and shook his head with a laugh.

He bent down to pick up her shoes, planning to put them back on her feet.

At that moment. Mia—completely tipsy—could barely see who was in front of her.

I don't wanna wear them.”

You'll get sick walking barefoot,” Josh said gently.

But Mia refused “No, they're uncomfortable.”

Josh looked at her, exasperated. “You really won't wear them?”

“Nope.”

Josh sighed and looked at her for a moment. Then he stood, holding her heels in one hand, and with the other, scooped her

up into his arms.

Mia wrapped her **arms** around his neck, her whole body pressed against his.

Maybe it was the alcohol, but her skin was burning. Her cheeks were hot.

Her small face leaned against his chest, clinging to the coolness of his body.

“You’re really comfy... I like it

She lifted her head, her rosy face brushing against the chiseled lines of his jaw.

Her **warm** lips grazed his mouth.

Josh’s pupils trembled. His body **went** rigid.

His voice dropped hoarsely. “Mia, behave yourself”

But Mia couldn’t hear him. Even if she could, her brain wasn’t processing anything.

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Chapter 403 The Trickster Groomer

She kept nuzzling into him, soft and clingy

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Josh exhaled a shaky breath. “You really don’t make life easy”

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“Good thing you ran into me. Anyone else, and who knows what could’ve happened to you.”

Just the thought of another man touching Mia filled Josh with rage.

He didn’t understand himself—
why he was acting this way over a woman he’d only just met.

+8 Pearls

Normally, he wouldn't even drive a strange woman anywhere, much less hold an umbrella for her, or carry her around like

this

But now, looking down at the way she nestled into his arms like a lazy kitten, completely defenseless, he whispered:

You started this. So when you wake up. don't pretend it didn't happen."

Josh carried Mia into a private lounge.

He placed her gently on the bed. But her arms were still tightly looped around his neck, and he was pulled down with her.

Their noses almost touched. The distance between them was almost nothing

So close that Josh could see every detail of her face.

His throat tightened. It took every ounce of control not to lose it.

He carefully unwrapped her arms from around his neck.

He stood, ready to leave.

But a sudden thought struck him.

He didn't want to walk away like this. He needed to leave a mark, something to make sure she wouldn't forget **him**.

Then it hit him and his lips curled into a sly smile.

He took off his suit jacket and tossed it on the floor. Then he yanked open the collar of his white dress shirt—two buttons flew

off from the force

Still not satisfied, he ran a hand through his hair, mussing it up until it looked like someone had thoroughly ravished him.

Now he looked like a decent man who'd just been taken advantage of

He placed his necktie in Mia's hand, then leaned down to rest beside the bed.

No one knew how much time passed before the alcohol started to wear off.

Min slowly woke up, her head heavy.

But the moment she saw the man slumped beside her bed, she gasped in shock.

Josh stirred, faking a groggy expression. He lifted his head, eyes drowsy.

“What’s wrong?”

Mia’s brows drew together. “What... what did you do to me?”

Send Gifts

Chapter 404 An Unexpected Proposal

Josh was secretly amused, though he wore a look of deadpan helplessness.

“You’re asking if I did something to you? That’s rich. Shouldn’t I be the one asking that?”

As he spoke, he pointed at himself.

Mia finally took a closer look at him—and the more she saw, the more horrified she became. Her face turned beet red.

The man before her looked like he’d just been ravished: clothes disheveled, hair messy, his shirt torn wide open, revealing glimpses of a toned chest.

To make matters worse, she was still clutching his tie, keeping him from getting up.

There was nothing left to say.

It had to be her. She must have gotten drunk and thrown herself at him.

She’d probably kissed and pawed at him. That would explain the lipstick smudged across his cheek.

Oh God-

Mia wanted to crawl into a hole and disappear.

At this moment, she couldn’t possibly imagine that the one who’d schemed against Josh in their past life... had now been playfully schemed against by him.

She glanced down at herself.

Her clothes were perfectly in place. It was clear Josh hadn't taken advantage of her.

Her head throbbed. She'd never drunk before, and she had no idea she'd go wild once alcohol hit her system.

It was Lauren's wedding, and she'd gotten too caught up in the celebration. A few extra drinks, and now this mess.

Mia forced herself to stay calm. Looking at Josh—who looked like he'd just gone through a war—she apologized.

"I'm really sorry. I was drunk. I didn't mean to."

Josh stared at her. "You did all this to me, and you think a simple 'sorry' is enough?"

Mia's heart sank.

It seemed he wasn't going to let this slide.

And she couldn't blame him. If the roles were reversed and she were harassed by a drunk man, she'd call the police.

Looking incredibly guilty, Mia said, "I truly apologize. I know words aren't enough. Whatever you want, just say it— if it's something I can do, I'll do my best to make it up to you."

Josh was laughing inside, but his face stayed serious.

He'd found he really enjoyed teasing her.

Maybe it wasn't the most noble thing to do—but he didn't want to miss his chance with Mia.

Something deep inside told him that if he let her slip away, he'd never meet another girl who made him feel this way again.

So he was willing to do whatever it took to stay in her life.

Josh took a deep breath. "I know you didn't mean for this to happen, but it happened. And you took my first kiss. I'm a bit old-fashioned. I nearly lost my innocence today, so.... why don't I just be your boyfriend from now on?"

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Chapter 404 An Unexpected Proposal

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+8 Pearls

She was stunned.

She'd expected him to ask for financial compensation, or demand something she couldn't possibly give—but this?

Josh saw her hesitate and started to feel nervous.

Was she going to turn him down?

Suppressing his anxiety, he added, "Back in the car, didn't you promise to fulfill one request for me? How about this be it—be my girlfriend. I'll be your boyfriend. That way, what happened between us is totally appropriate."

Mia snapped out of it and studied the man in front of her.

He was handsome—her type, really.

From the very first moment she'd seen him, she'd felt a strange sense of familiarity and ease.

Since she didn't dislike him—and considering what she'd done—it only made sense to take responsibility.

She cleared her throat to ease the tension.

"That's... your only request?"

Josh nodded. "Just the one. Will you agree?"

Mia hesitated, then nodded too.

"I... I agree."

Josh lowered his gaze, hiding the emotion surging in his eyes.

Finally. She was his.

A sense of relief washed over him—
as though he'd finally gotten something he'd been chasing for lifetimes.

And yet, he was sure of one thing: in all his years, he had never cared about any woman like this before.

Maybe this really was love at first sight. Sudden, irrational, overwhelming.

Mia adjusted her clothes and stood up from the bed. "The banquet must be wrapping up. Let's go back out."

Send Gifts

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Chapter 405 No Room for Forgiveness

"Okay."

Josh was in an exceptionally good mood.

He straightened his clothes and left the lounge with Mia.

Just as they reached the banquet hall, they ran into Marilyn.

Marilyn immediately grabbed Mia. "Where have you been? I tried calling and you didn't answer!"

Mia glanced at Josh beside her, blushing.

"I had a bit too much to drink... so I took a nap in the lounge."

"Oh, I see." Marilyn didn't think much of it and led her over to Lauren.

Lauren took Mia's hand. "Mia, thank you for everything today."

Mia's smile was warm. "It's your big day—this is nothing."

"So, where are you headed after this?"

"I'm going back to the institute."

"Why don't you ride with us? We can drop you off on the way."

But Mia shook her head. "Lauren, I can get back on my own. It's your wedding day. You should focus on your wedding night with Mr. Felix."

She gently pushed Lauren into Felix's arms.

Felix raised a brow. “How about letting Josh take Mia back to the institute?”

The suggestion was exactly what Josh wanted. “Don’t worry. I’ll make sure Mia gets there safely.”

He turned to her. “Mia, shall we?”

Mia met his clear and earnest gaze, feeling a little shy—but she didn’t refuse.

The group exited the hotel.

By then, the rain had stopped.

Mia got into Josh’s car and left first.

Lauren and Felix were just about to get in their own car when a gentle voice called out.

“Lauren.”

Lauren’s steps froze. Even after ten years, that voice was still painfully familiar.

She didn’t respond and kept walking toward the car.

Alice’s voice grew desperate. “Lauren, I didn’t come here for anything else. I just wanted to wish you a happy marriage.”

Lauren stopped again, her voice cold. “I heard your blessing. You can go now.”

Alice’s face twisted with sorrow. “It’s been ten years... and you still won’t forgive me?”

For the past decade, she’d thought about Lauren every single day. She wished she could appear in front of her, make amends, shower her with care—repay every bit of what she owed.

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Chapter 405 No Room for Forgiveness

But she knew Lauren would never care for her apologies.

+8 Pearls

Because she understood Lauren’s fierce and stubborn nature, she had stayed away all these years, even though her heart ached to see her again.

Ten years of restraint.

Now, not even fifty, Alice had a head full of white hair. She looked more like someone in her sixties or seventies.

The constant regret had worn down her health.

She knew she didn't have much time left.

All she wanted was to see Lauren get married. To see, with her own eyes, that Lauren was truly happy.

More than anything, she wished she could be there to witness Lauren becoming a mother. If she could just see her future grandchild once, she'd die with no regrets.

With that hope in her heart, she had come to Balewood.

But Cloud Palace had refused her entry.

So she waited outside the hotel for hours—just to feel like she'd still somehow witnessed Lauren's happiness.

Alice looked at Lauren with trembling hope.

She wanted—more than anything—to hear Lauren say the words “I forgive you.”

But she was destined to be disappointed.

Lauren met her gaze with an icy coldness, not a hint of warmth.

“Search your heart. Do you really think you deserve forgiveness?”

Alice's body shook.

The pain she'd caused Lauren in their past life was irreversible—and even she knew she didn't deserve to be forgiven.

Her years of hoping for forgiveness had been selfish in itself.

Alice let out a bitter laugh. “You're right. I don't deserve it. I understand now. I'll never show myself to you again... But I still wish you happiness, Lauren.”

Lauren didn't spare her another glance as she stepped into the car.

If she couldn't forgive David, there was no way she could forgive Alice.

In her past life, Alice was worse than David.

David had hurt her thinking Willow was his biological daughter.

But Alice had known all along that Willow wasn't—yet she still humiliated and tormented her own flesh and blood for the sake of an adopted child.

Yes, Lauren had been reborn—but that didn't mean the past hadn't happened.

If she forgave people like David and Alice, how could she face Mia, who had once committed murder just to avenge her?

Send Gifts

Chapter 406 Deserved Consequences

And so, she would not forgive. Not now, not ever.

The car door slowly closed, and the vehicle pulled away, leaving Alice standing alone, dazed as she watched it disappear into the distance.

"I deserve this. I don't deserve your forgiveness. But... I really don't have much time left. I just wanted to hear you call me 'Mom' one more time before I die."

It was as if every ounce of strength had left Alice's body. She staggered violently, nearly collapsing.

Suddenly, a hand reached out and steadied her.

Alice looked up to see Elliot's concerned eyes.

"Mom, are you okay?"

Alice shook her head. "I'm fine."

Elliot had just been released after serving a ten-year prison sentence.

Ten years behind bars had worn away all of his pride.

And strangely, he found prison life oddly familiar.

He couldn't explain it. It was his first time in prison, yet everything felt eerily recognizable.

He was haunted by recurring nightmares.

In his dreams, he constantly tormented his own sister—yelling at her, beating her. Even though Willow’s performances were always so clumsy, it was as if the whole family had been blind, unable to see the truth.

In every dream, he was hurting his real sister.

The nightmares had gone on for ten years, tormenting him the entire time.

He didn’t understand why he kept dreaming those things—until after his release, when he told his mother.

Only then did she reveal the truth.

They weren’t just dreams. Everything he saw had truly happened.

In a past life, his biological sister had been so badly abused by their family that she became disabled.

No wonder the guilt had eaten at him every night. He had done far too much wrong.

“Mom... Lauren won’t forgive us. What are we supposed to do?”

Alice felt a heavy pressure in her chest. A hot rush of blood surged up from her throat and nose.

She spat a mouthful of blood, her vision going dark.

“Mom!” Elliot shouted in panic.

Alice gave a bitter laugh. “Karma. This is karma.”

Alice slowly regained consciousness. She pulled the IV from her hand and got out of bed, walking to the door.

Just as she was about to open it, she overheard the conversation between the doctor and Elliot.

“Your mother’s in the late stages of stomach cancer. She’s got at most six months left.”

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Chapter 406 Deserved Consequences

“Doctor, please—there must be something you can do.”

+8 Pearls

“Sigh. It’s too late. Instead of wasting money on treatments, let her go home and spend the time doing whatever she wants.”

The doctor walked away, leaving Elliot slumped against the wall, completely defeated.

The door opened. Alice stepped out.

Elliot looked up sharply “Mom... you heard?”

Alice nodded. “I heard, I don’t want treatment. Let’s go home.”

“But-

“No buts. At this stage, treatment’s pointless”

Suddenly, she thought of Lauren.

In her past life, during her time in the Bennett household, Lauren had never once had a proper hot meal. Sometimes she went the whole day hungry, only eating the family’s cold leftovers at night.

She never got stomach problems at the orphanage, but after coming to the Bennetts, she did.

Lauren had always acted like she didn’t have stomach issues, but Alice had known.

She just pretended not to see it. She never cared.

She remembered one night when Elliot **had** a stomachache.

Every time that happened, it was always Lauren who ran around caring for him.

That night was no different—Lauren had stayed up taking care of him.

Alice had gotten up in the middle of the night and accidentally seen Lauren, exhausted, sitting on the couch and secretly taking Elliot’s stomach meds.

Only then did she realize that Lauren had stomach issues too.

Lauren

But she brushed it off Lauren had come from an orphanage—she could handle hardship. A little stomach trouble was nothing.

Only now did she finally understand: being able to endure hardship meant she had endured too much

In her past life. Lauren had suffered terribly

Now it was her turn to experience what that pain felt like.

“Let’s go home.”

“Mom, you’re this sick.. shouldn’t we tell Lauren? She is your daughter, after all.”

Alice gave a bitter smile. “When Lauren was so sick she couldn’t even get out of bed, no one in the Bennett family cared.”

Elliot fell silent. He had nothing left to say.

Send Gifts

Chapter 407 A New Beginning, A Shadow from the Past

After leaving the hospital, Alice and Elliot returned to Hoverdale.

For the past ten years, Alice had worked nonstop. Only by keeping busy could she stop herself from spiraling into regret.

So, they still lived in the same villa, with no worries about food or clothing.

But illness strikes without mercy. Once she got home, Alice collapsed into bed and couldn’t get back up.

She left all her assets to Elliot.

Elliot hesitated. “Mom, aren’t you going to leave anything for Lauren?”

Alice’s eyes were full of pain. “Of course I want to, but I know Lauren won’t accept it. She can’t wait to cut all ties with us. Why would she ever take anything from me?”

“Elliot, I’m giving everything to you. If—someday—Lauren forgives you, then give her the share that should’ve been hers.”

“Alright.”

The days passed.

In a blink, half a year was gone.

Alice had been ravaged by stomach cancer. She was skin and bones now, looking like a skeleton as she lay in bed.

Elliot watched his mother deteriorate and couldn't help but cry.

"Mom, I'll go find Lauren now. Hang in there. I'll bring her here."

Alice summoned the last of her strength to hold him back, her voice barely audible. "Do n't go. I don't want her to see me like this. I'll scare her."

She knew that even if Elliot went, Lauren still wouldn't come.

All she wanted was to keep a shred of dignity before she died.

Alice's eyes were cloudy.

Lauren, how hard your heart is. Your mother is dying, and you still won't say you forgive me.

But... I don't have the right to blame you

Even *if I die* full of regret. I brought *it* on myself.

If there's a next life, I hope *I can be reborn earlier—*
so *I won't only remember everything after I've already lost you.*

Alice closed her heavy eyelids and took her final breath.

Suddenly, Lauren's heart clenched so hard she nearly fainted.

Felix immediately called for the family doctor.

After the examination, the doctor beamed. "Congratulations, sir. She's pregnant."

Lauren's face lit up with joy.

So that's why she suddenly felt so unwell—she was pregnant.

And just like that, all her discomfort vanished without a trace.

My name *is* Nancy.

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Chapter 407 A New Beginning, A Shadow from the Past

I have a mom who's a top-tier scientist and a dad who's a powerhouse in the business world

They're madly in love—the most affectionate couple I've ever seen.

Born into a family like this. I've been showered with love since the moment I came into the world

+8 Pearls

Not just from Mom and Dad and Great-Grandma, but also from my grandparents and my uncle. To them. I'm a priceless treasure.

But even though they spoil me, they're also strict when it comes to raising me.

After I started preschool, the teacher taught us to be kind, united, loving, and generous.

When I told Mom what we learned, she gave me a serious look and said:

"Sweetheart, your teacher's not wrong. But remember—if someone's malicious toward you or tries to bully you, you absolutely don't need to tolerate it. And you don't owe kindness to those who hurt you. You fight back"

"And if there's something you love and don't want to share—you have the right not to share it."

I looked at her and asked. "Mom, if I do that does that mean I'm not a good kid?"

Mom gently stroked **my** head and said

"The first thing you need to do is protect yourself. Only then can you think about being a good kid"

"Sweetheart, your dad and I work so hard and stand at the top so that no one can bully us—and so that no one can bully you We've got your back. We don't go looking for trouble, but we don't fear it either. Understand?"

At the time, I *didn't* fully understand, but I knew Mom would never lie to me so I trusted every word she said,

And it's that trust that shaped me. Whenever I faced hardship. I never let myself feel small or defeated. At school, no one dared to bully me

Maybe it was part of my personality, but I knew it also had a lot to do with the family I came from

Still, I never abused my status to *hurt* others

My days at preschool were mostly joyful and peaceful.

Except lately, I've noticed a strange man.

He looks to be about the same age as my dad—tall, handsome, and oddly, he kind of resembles Mom

He's been hanging around near my school a lot lately.

Send Gifts

Chapter 408 The Stranger at the School Gate

I'd seen him many times before—during school drop-offs and pick-ups. Every time I noticed him, he was watching me.

About two weeks passed like this. Then one day, my driver was late picking me up, and all the other kids had already gone home. I was the only one left.

That's when the strange man finally approached me.

His eyes were full of warmth and affection. He didn't look like a bad person.

"Nancy," he said softly, calling me by name.

I stared at him, confused. "Sir.. do you know me?"

"I'm your uncle," he said gently.

"Uncle?" I scrunched up my face in disbelief. "You're lying. You're not my uncle."

His face flickered with hurt as he tried to explain. "I really am your uncle. Nancy. Let me take you home, okay?"

He reached out as if to pick me up.

But I didn't know him. Why would I let a stranger touch me?

Mom and Dad always told me never to go anywhere with strangers.

I immediately darted behind my teacher and grabbed her leg. "Teacher, I don't know him. He must be a kidnapper! Call the police!"

Elliot froze in place when he heard that.

Only after his mother died did the memories of his past life fully return.

All those nightmares he had in prison— they weren't dreams. They were memories of things that really happened.

Every single day behind bars had been a living hell. He'd wanted so badly to find Lauren and explain everything. But after seeing his mother die without ever being forgiven, he didn't have the courage.

He knew the damage he caused Lauren was no less than his mother's. If Lauren wouldn't even forgive Alice, how could she possibly forgive him?

So he stayed put in Hoverdale, year after year.

For all these years, he lived with regret and guilt.

He had never intended to disturb Lauren's life again. But in the end, he couldn't help himself he came to Balewood

Even if it was just to see her from afar, to witness her happiness, that was enough.

That's how he learned Lauren and Felix had a daughter.

Her name was Nancy.

The same name as in the previous life. And she looked exactly the same too.

In the past life, Lauren had died without ever knowing she had a daughter.

But in this life, she was finally living the happy, loved life she deserved.

For Elliot, not being forgiven by Lauren was his greatest regret. Second to that was never being able to enter his only niece's heart in their last life.

He and Kenneth had lived in the same villa Lauren once suffered in, getting through each day on memories of her. They

Chapter 408 The Stranger at the School Gate

both died not long after

Now, seeing Nancy again in this life filled Elliot with overwhelming joy.

He never planned to approach her. Just watching from a distance would have been enough.

But today, the driver still hadn't shown up.

He saw little Nancy standing alone at the school gate, looking around anxiously, and he couldn't hold back anymore—he stepped forward.

He just hadn't expected Nancy to be this alert.

"I swear I'm not a bad guy. Nancy. Please believe me." Elliot pleaded.

But I didn't believe him. I pointed at the security guard and shouted. "Unde security! Catch him! He's trying to kidnap me!"

The guard knew exactly who I was—Lauren and Felix's daughter the most cinematic princess of both the Brooker and Mavis families.

Trying to snatch Nancy? Might as well be signing your death certificate.

The guard didn't hesitate. He grabbed Elliot right away and didn't give him a single chance to explain, dragging him straight to the police station.

No matter how much Elliot tried to clarify, the guard wouldn't listen.

I stood there, arms crossed, watching the man struggle.

I tilted my head. For some reason... seeing him so upset made my chest feel tight. Alim felt uncomfortable.

I frowned. It must've been because that strange man ruined my mood. That's why I felt weird.

Hmph!

Try to kidnap me? Dream on.

Just then, the Brooker family's car finally pulled up.

I got in. As the car drove away, I could still see that man trying to explain himself through the window.

The Brooker Family Estate

“Grandma. I’m home!” I shouted happily as I ran inside.

Kate beamed from ear to ear. “My precious little Nancy is home! Slow down—don’t fall!”

I dove into my Grandma’s arms, nuzzling my face against her.

She smiled and asked, “Sweetheart, how was school today? Did you have fun?”

Send Gifts

Chapter 409 No Forgiveness Across Lifetimes

Nancy nodded obediently. “It was fun. Just like every other day... but...”

“But what?” Kate asked, curious.

Nancy didn’t hide anything. “I met a strange man at the school gate. He said he was my uncle and tried to take me home.”

At that, the old lady’s expression turned serious.

“Nancy, do you know him?”

Nancy shook her head. “I don’t. I’ve never seen him before. So I thought he might be a kidnapper and asked the school security guards to catch him and send him to the police.”

Only then did Kate breathe a sigh of relief.

“That’s good. Very good. Nancy, you did exactly the right thing. If the driver isn’t there to pick you up, never go anywhere with strangers.”

“Don’t worry, Great–Grandma. I know. Mom and Dad already taught me.”

Even though Nancy was safe, Kate still felt shaken.

Who had the guts to try and abduct a child from the Brooker family?

She couldn’t let it go.

Kate immediately called Felix and told him everything that had happened at the school.

Felix's face darkened.

His wife and daughter were his bottom line. Anyone who dared lay a hand on his daughter would never be forgiven.

Without hesitation, Felix dropped what he was doing and drove straight to the police station.

When he arrived, he found Elliot.

"I told you I'm not a kidnapper. I'm Nancy's uncle," Elliot was still trying to explain to the police.

That was when Felix appeared.

Their eyes met.

"So it's you," Felix said coolly. "Ten years in prison, and you still haven't learned your lesson?"

He looked calm. "What? Now you've set your sights on my daughter?"

Elliot went quiet for a moment. "Felix, you know that's not what I meant."

Felix raised a brow. "All I know is, you almost took my wife's kidney for your adopted sister."

The words hit Elliot like a blade.

He hated himself—just like his mother had hated herself until her dying breath.

God had given him a second chance. So why hadn't he awakened sooner?

If only he had remembered earlier, maybe he wouldn't have hurt Lauren again in this life

.

In both lives, once he finally woke up, it was already too late. The pain was always the same—endless and crushing.

Nearly begging, Elliot said, "Felix, I didn't come to Balewood for trouble. I just wanted to see Lauren and Nancy. I'm their brother, her uncle. I swear I mean no harm."

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Chapter 409 No Forgiveness Across Lifetimes

+8 Pearls

Felix's tone remained indifferent. "You need to understand—Lauren doesn't want to see you. Your presence would only ruin her mood."

"And my daughter doesn't need an uncle who once hurt her mother."

"I'll let today slide. But if there's a next time, I won't be so forgiving."

With that, Felix turned and walked away.

Elliot covered his face in anguish.

In both lives, Lauren had never forgiven him. She had never once accepted his apologies or reparations. His guilt was like a bottomless pit, consuming him.

Wandering out of the police station in a daze, Elliot had planned to return to Hoverdale—but his heart wouldn't allow it. He went straight to the research institute to wait for Lauren.

"Lauren, I know I was wrong. Can you forgive me?" he pleaded, utterly humbled.

He wasn't asking for much—just a single word of forgiveness.

If she gave him that, he'd die without hesitation.

It had become his obsession—his and his mother's.

"Lauren, I know we wronged you. But I've already paid in my last life. Isn't that enough?"

"Do you know... our mother's gone. She died without ever hearing you forgive her. Do you know how bitter, how tormented she was when she died? She didn't rest in peace."

"We made terrible mistakes in our past life. But do we really have to carry that guilt into this one too? What must I do for you to let go?"

"Lauren, please... your brother is begging you. Forgive me."

Now nearing thirty, Lauren had matured a great deal.

Her expression was cool and distant—utterly devoid of emotion.

She replied calmly, "Not in the last life. Not in this one. Not in the next one either."

She walked away without so much as another glance.

Still unwilling to give up, Elliot chased after her, trying to grab her arm.

But Lauren easily dodged him.

Send Gifts

Chapter 410 This Life Is Mine

“Lauren, are you really this heartless toward me?”

Lauren said nothing, but deep down, she was laughing coldly.

No matter how heartless she might be, she could never match the cruelty of the Bennett family.

The pain from her past life was real, undeniable. Why should she be expected to forgive them just because they apologized?

Without hesitation, Lauren got in the car.

Elliot’s emotions completely collapsed.

“I spent the second half of my past life in regret! Isn’t that punishment enough? Do you really need to see me die before you’ll forgive me?”

Lauren’s voice was like ice. “Then go die somewhere else. Don’t die in front of me and bring me bad luck. Drive.”

The car pulled away, leaving Elliot standing alone.

Tears streamed down his face uncontrollably.

Some things can never be undone. A shattered mirror can never be made whole.

No matter how much he tried to atone, the damage had been done. In this life, he would never be forgiven. He would die with regret.

Lauren... so this is how you punish us?

So ruthless.

Lauren: “I can give the purest love to those I care about. I’d even die for them, and I’d do it willingly. But if they don’t want it, if they toss it aside like garbage, I can take it all back. If you hurt me, why should I forgive you? Put the pieces back together? No. From the moment I was reborn, I swore I’d never debase myself again. I have parents like Mr. Timely and Madam Sh

irley. I have a brother like Victor. I don't lack family. I have Felix—who loves me, spoils me, only ever sees me. I don't lack love. And I have a sweet, adorable daughter. My life is full. My life is happy. In this life, I have everything I dreamed of in the last one. Felix's love hasn't faded with time. In this lifetime, from beginning to end, he's loved only me. We grew old together, hand in hand, and got to see our daughter get married and have kids of her own. Nancy married the son of Mia and Josh. I never expected Mia and Josh to end up together—and I don't know how it happened. All I care about is that Mia is happy. And Josh didn't let me down. He truly loved her. Their son inherited Mia's brilliance and Josh's good looks. He grew up with Nancy. Childhood sweethearts. Perfect match. In this life, even Mia lived peacefully and joyfully. Marilyn has a big, happy family. Everything is so beautiful. Without those people from my past life... everything really is better."