

# This Time, I'll Be the Villain's Favorite Daughter Novel Chapter 1

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## I Stopped Believing 1

Chapter 1 Being a Nobody Is Perfect

In her last life, Maya Jackson was the biological daughter of the richest man, lost and living outside the family.

She thought that once she was found and brought back, she'd be the center of everyone's love, but it turned out someone else already held that role.

After she went missing, her father, devastated with grief, had taken in an adopted daughter as a substitute. When Maya returned home at the age of eight, she found Kaia Jackson, bright, lively, and beautifully dressed, nestled in her father's arms and acting spoiled.

Meanwhile, she was awkward and shabby, like an outsider who had wandered into a family that didn't belong to her.

In front of her biological father, she couldn't even bring herself to say "Dad," and naturally, no one liked a child who barely spoke.

Meanwhile, everyone, men and women alike, adored Kaia.

And those striking, high-status men with their polished backgrounds all seemed to enjoy picking on Maya, using her as a way to curry favor with Kaia.

In the end, at 16, Maya chose to end her miserable life.

She thought that was it for her, but when she opened her eyes again, she found herself standing at the entrance of an orphanage.

Maya looked down at her short arms and legs. She'd already been sitting at the entrance in a daze for an entire afternoon.

After a long while, the girl blinked hard, finally snapping out of the shock of being reborn, her thoughts drifting in confusion.

This was an absurd world. Human lives were cheap, and riots and attacks broke out on the streets like they were nothing.

For the wealthy, the law might as well not exist. Power and money meant everything.

Following the script of her past life, in three years, her biological father would find her, and she'd once again be dragged into a life of endless comparisons, rejection, and exclusion.

Given a second chance, she didn't want anything else. She just wanted to stay far, far away from those elite, untouchable people.

An ordinary, quiet life was all she wanted.

Maya took a deep breath. The cold wind whipping down the street rushed into her lungs, clearing her head.

She glanced around, hoping to find someone nearby willing to adopt her so she could avoid ever being taken back.

The orphanage gates stood wide open, cold wind howling through, with barely any passersby in sight.

Maya waited there for a long time before finally spotting a man walking by, dressed simply in a white shirt and black pants.

He wore glasses and had black hair and eyes, with no logos or brands on him. His face was as plain as water: forgettable and nothing remarkable.

To Maya, who was used to seeing domineering CEOs with sharp features, there were only two words for someone like him: a nobody.

But who said being a nobody was bad? Being a nobody was amazing!

After everything she'd endured in her past life—scheming women and cold, calculating men around Kaia—she only liked ordinary people now.

Hesitation leads to defeat. Maya sprang to her feet, rushed straight at the “nobody,” grabbed tightly onto the hem of his pants, and blurted out something utterly shocking.

“Hello, sir. Can you be my dad?”

Raymond Clark came to an abrupt stop.

He'd been deep in thought, reviewing last night's mission and debating whether to turn down a troublesome assignment.

Then suddenly, his pant leg was tugged, followed by a clear, childish voice in his ear.

Be her dad?

Startled, he lowered his gaze. In his dark eyes, the reflection of a small child appeared.

She was a dirty little thing, looking like she'd been pulled out of a trash heap. Her grip on his pants was tight, her tone urgent.

“What?” Raymond raised an eyebrow, finding the situation absurd as he looked at the child who had popped out of nowhere.

Maya tilted her head up at him. Under the dim light, her pupils looked unusually round. “I'm very smart. When I'm hungry, I eat. When I'm sleepy, I sleep. If I get sick, I'll just end my life. I won't cause you any trouble.

“Please adopt me!” she said, bowing deeply.

He paused. Huh. She's oddly polite.

The man crouched down.

That movement brought him to eye level with Maya.

Raymond didn't touch her. He simply looked more closely at her dull hair and the red, swollen frostbite on her face.

She looked pitiful.

“Why me?”

There was a hint of curiosity in his voice. He didn't think he had anything about him that would make a child choose him so decisively.

Still, she really was... surprisingly bold.

Meeting his dark, steady gaze, Maya decided honesty was the best option. "I like ordinary people.

"You look very ordinary," she said, scanning his unremarkable features, her voice filled with hope and a touch of delight. "We're the same kind of person."

She was ordinary, and so was he.

For once, Raymond fell silent.

After all, calling him "ordinary" was, in a way, darkly ironic.

As for Maya's request to be adopted, Raymond's instincts told him this little girl would bring trouble into his otherwise quiet home.

Refusing would be the simplest choice.

He never went out of his way to invite trouble.

But...

His wife, Wendy Clark, was always complaining that the house felt too empty, constantly egging him on to go out and snatch a girl off the street to fill the void. Her exact words were, "It's not that I prefer girls over boys. I just want both sons and daughters.

"I only want one daughter. I don't care if she's stolen, tricked, or kidnapped.

"Chubby, skinny, pretty, or ugly—anything works!"

Thinking of his wife's relentless nagging day and night, Raymond found himself actually considering the idea of adopting a girl.

After a brief moment of thought, the man let out what seemed like a helpless sigh.

He lifted his hand, his skin a faint, unhealthy pale, and gently touched her face, his cool fingertips brushing against her frostbitten, flushed cheeks.

Her whole body felt soft and fragile.

He had no clue whether he could really keep her alive.

"I can adopt you," he said quietly, "as long as you behave."

Raymond was an assassin. He preferred a quiet, controlled environment. He didn't need a noisy child who would create problems.

"I'll be good, I promise." Maya quickly crossed her heart in a vow. "I definitely won't cause you any trouble!"

Raymond reluctantly chose to believe her.

After he agreed to adopt her, she'd been a little uneasy about the paperwork, but in reality, the director didn't even bother asking much about his background.

She simply processed everything quickly, pushed a few forms in front of Raymond, and pointed to where he needed to sign.

Maya stood on her tiptoes, straining to see the name he wrote on the form.

Raymond Clark.

The name fit him, carrying a faintly detached, almost indifferent chill.

Once the adoption was handled, he took her away on the spot.

She decisively dropped her old last name, hurrying to keep up with his stride, her

voice soft. "Sir, my name is Maya Clark."

She didn't want anything tying her to that trash father from her past life.

Raymond slowed his pace, watching her awkwardly try to keep up, then casually hoisted her onto his shoulder and corrected her. "You should call me Dad now."

Caught off guard, Maya ended up draped over his shoulder, instinctively pressing her face against the cool back of his neck as she murmured, "Dad."

Her voice came out muffled, nearly swallowed by the sound of his footsteps.

The sudden physical contact made Raymond pause for a fraction of a second.

Hearing that soft, hesitant "Dad," he forcibly suppressed the urge to toss her aside and gave a quiet acknowledgment.

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They took a bus all the way to an apartment building and stopped outside a unit.

The one who opened the door to greet them was a gentle, elegant-looking woman.

But the moment she noticed the small figure in Raymond's arms, her calm expression vanished, replaced by a delighted scream.

"Oh, my god! Honey! Y-you actually kidnapped a child?!"

Raymond lazily lifted his eyelids, not even getting the chance to grunt out a response before Wendy cut him off.

"I told you forever ago you should just kidnap one! You know I've wanted a daughter for so long. Thank you, honey!" She planted a loud kiss on him, then completely ignored her husband as she eagerly pulled Maya into a tight hug.

Wait, kidnap a child??

S-she thinks that's okay?

Maya froze for two seconds, but before she could process it, she was swallowed up in Wendy's warm embrace.

"Sweetheart, what's your name?"

The woman smelled like fresh laundry. The apartment was comfortably warm, and children's building blocks were scattered across the living room carpet.

Everything about this place radiated warmth.

That faint sense of something being off instantly became insignificant in the face of how desperately Maya longed for a home.

She wanted a family like this so badly.

Almost instinctively, she hugged Wendy back, tilting her little face up with a bright, radiant smile. "Ma'am, my name is Maya Clark."

"Maya." Cradling the girl affectionately, she naturally added, "I'm your mom."

Compared to Wendy's overflowing enthusiasm, Raymond had already collapsed into the couch, looking like an overworked office drone whose soul had been drained dry.

After being used to those broad-shouldered, sharp-featured CEO types, suddenly seeing a man who looked realistically worn out made Maya feel an overwhelming sense of safety. With complete sincerity, she said, "Dad, you're amazing."

This kind of harmless, non-threatening man was exactly the kind of security she'd always wanted.

Her eyes were full of admiration.

The completely unexpected reaction made Raymond's brain stall for a second.

This kid's way of thinking... is definitely not normal.

I look this worn out, and she's still looking at me like I'm some kind of hero.

At that moment, soft footsteps sounded from the staircase.

A boy suddenly appeared at the turn of the stairs.

He looked about her age, dressed in casual home clothes, with delicate features.

His gaze was empty and hollow as it rested quietly on Maya, as if he were observing her, or maybe just spacing out.

Wendy stood up, smiling gently as she introduced them in a warm, natural tone.

"Alfred, look, this is your sister. Maya, from now on, we're family."

She brought the boy downstairs and had him stand in front of Maya.

Up close, Maya could clearly feel that this kid felt almost like a ghost.

Wendy brushed her hair behind her ear, looking at her youngest son as she spoke slowly and clearly, smiling. "We need to protect our family. You'll protect your little sister, right, Alfred?"

She deliberately emphasized the words "your little sister."

Alfred's dark eyes shifted toward Maya.

The little girl seemed completely out of the loop, staring at him blankly.

The boy paused for about two seconds, then nodded. "Okay, Mom. I understand. I'll protect Maya."

Wendy let out a breath of relief.

Out of all her children, Alfred was the one she worried about the least. With him around, she didn't have to worry about Maya quietly dying somewhere she couldn't see.

"Alright," she reached out and gently patted both children on the head, smiling brightly. "Alfred, take Maya to play. There are snacks in the cabinet."

Wendy hurried into the kitchen to start preparing dinner for the kids.

Alfred still looked completely emotionless.

He didn't go for the snacks. Instead, he walked up to Maya and began introducing the family on his own. "I'm your fourth brother, Alfred.

"Dad isn't home very often.

"Our eldest brother, Edric, is a doctor. He works late treating patients, so he usually doesn't come home either."

Maya hugged her knees as she sat across from him. "Then Edric must have it pretty hard, right?"

She'd grown up in an orphanage. She knew how difficult it was for ordinary people to make a living.

Alfred thought about Edric's sky-high fees for showing up and answered with two simple words. "He's fine."

He paused, then continued, "Our second brother, George, works as a police officer. Our third brother, Toby, has been sick for many years and stays with Grandpa.

"So it's just us at home."

What he didn't say was that, after getting his medical license, Edric Clark had been working overtime lately, staying out late killing people.

George Clark had lost count of how many fellow officers he'd secretly taken down behind the scenes.

And Toby Clark was completely insane. If no one kept an eye on him, he'd cause serious trouble for the whole family.

But in Maya's ears, all of that was automatically translated into kind-hearted Edric saving lives.

Righteous George was serving as a police officer.

And her simple, caring grandpa was looking after his sick grandson.

What a wonderfully kind family!