

The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late #Left Behind 211 - Read The Unwanted Daughter: When Love Comes Too Late Left Behind 211

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Chapter 211 The Family That Once Was

Chapter 211 The Family That Once Was

Right then, a deep wave of unease washed over Liam, making his skin crawl.

How could they not notice that Tracy was hurt too, maybe even badly wounded?

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It felt so wrong that Liam's mind drifted back to several years earlier, before Erin had returned. Back then, if Tracy got even the tiniest cut that barely drew blood, the whole family would panic and fuss over her.

Daphne would gently cradle her finger and blow on it to ease the sting, Andrew would rush to get the first aid kit, cleaning and wrapping the wound with care. Liam would furiously toss aside whatever had caused the injury, and Benjamin would pat her head, soothing her with kind words, saying, "Don't worry, Tracy. I'm always right here for you."

Yet here she was now, her head smeared with blood, and they acted as if they didn't even notice. All they did was lash out and condemn her.

Andrew boiled over with rage. He marched up and smacked Tracy hard across the cheek. "How long do you plan to keep pretending? Do you really think acting like this will get you off the hook?"

Tracy was already disoriented, and the slap knocked her completely off balance. She stumbled sideways toward the wall.

Liam moved fast to catch her, staring up at Andrew in shock. "Andrew, are you out of your mind? Can't you see she's hurt too?"

Those words snapped the enraged Jackman family out of it, like a bucket of ice water dumped over their heads.

Only then did they spot Tracy's bloodied state—and for a moment, they stood frozen.

Erin pulled away from Daphne's embrace, but her eyes weren't on Tracy—they were locked on Liam.

Her fierce glare could have swallowed him whole.

Why does this fool keep interfering with my plans?

She jumped in quickly. "Earlier, when Tracy was brawling with those paparazzi, she took a few hits from their cameras. But I saw Grandpa bleeding—badly. There was blood on the living room carpet, and all over Tracy's clothes. It was everywhere. It scared me to death." Tears welled up as she spoke.

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The Jackman family shook off their daze right away.

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Yeah, Tracy had brawled with the paparazzi, so a few scratches were expected. And most of the blood on her likely came from Franklin.

In a flash, their looks turned sour toward Tracy once more.

Daphne muttered, "She kicked off this whole disaster anyway, so whatever she gets is on her."

Benjamin added, "The business took a huge hit from her mess last time, and now she's stirred up another storm. We should have cut ties long ago."

Andrew chimed in, "She's been standing there just fine all along, still playing the victim to fish for pity. Tracy, your games are pathetic."

Liam crouched down, supporting Tracy as he gazed up at those three faces he knew so well. Now they looked like strangers.

For the first time, he saw the world through Tracy's eyes, catching a glimpse of his family's cold stares and twisted expressions.

Have Andrew and the others always been this harsh toward her?

A knot tightened in Liam's chest. He couldn't bring himself to meet the gaze of the woman in his arms.

Tracy, who had been totally zoned out, finally snapped back to reality.

She jerked her head up toward Erin and struggled to her feet. Then, with her features twisted in fury, she lunged forward.

Andrew jumped in to block her path. He barked, "What the hell do you think you're doing?"

Benjamin and Daphne stepped protectively in front of Erin, their faces tense with caution and fear.

Tracy paid them no mind. Her stare bored into Erin, ignoring her own wounds and the dizziness swirling in her head. She seemed ready to rip Erin to shreds.

"Why did you let those paparazzi in? Why lead them straight to Grandpa? Why didn't you have the maid help him upstairs?"

"Erin, I told you not to lay a finger on Grandpa! I swear I'll take you down, even if it kills me

too!"

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She fought like a wild animal, swinging fists and feet, even biting down on Andrew's arm. The sharp pain made him flinch and release her.

Tracy barreled toward Erin again, her frenzied look freezing Benjamin and Daphne in place. They could only watch in horror as she closed in on their beloved daughter.

Erin went pale with terror and turned to run. But out of nowhere, someone rushed in from her side, yanked her into a tight embrace, and shoved the oncoming Tracy away.

Tracy, already wobbly from dizziness, slammed into the nearby wall from the force.

The group was still reeling. They hurried to check on Erin, only to find her clutched in Norris's arms. He looked just as rattled.

"Erin, are you all right?"

Norris scanned her frantically as he held her close, as if afraid even the smallest scratch could hurt her.

Erin's eyes brimmed with tears. "Norris ... "

The sight of her on the verge of sobbing tore at his heart.

He turned around to shoot Tracy a hateful scowl. "Did you just try to murder Erin? You're insane. Isn't killing Mr. Franklin enough for you?"

"Grandpa's going *to* pull through! Shut your mouth!"

Tracy turned her head toward him, her eyes red and wild as she fixed him with a piercing stare. It was enough to make him choke back the rest of his rant.

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What was that fierce glare in Tracy's eyes? A storm of rage, loathing, coldness, and aggression -like a monster rising from the abyss to face its ultimate foe.

How could she even stare at Norris that way?

From the time they were kids, she had always been warm and loving toward him. Even at her angriest, she had never said a harsh word to him.

When he tricked her into going to Angelic Etiquette Academy, all she did was look at him with teary eyes and ask, "Why?"—her face full of hurt and surprise. She never lashed out or told him to shut his mouth with that kind of raw fury.

A sudden pang of unease gripped Norris for no clear reason.

Ever since hearing that Tracy had returned from Angelic Etiquette Academy, he had steered clear of her. He figured she might hound him and upset Erin.

But now, an odd sensation stirred inside him. It felt like the distance between them was stretching farther with every passing second.

Erin spotted him gazing blankly at Tracy and nearly gritted her teeth in annoyance.

She quickly grabbed Norris's collar, tears streaming down her face. "Norris, Tracy's acting so wild. She's scaring the hell out of me." she said, before breaking into sobs.

Norris jolted back to the moment. He wrapped her in his arms right away and soothed her softly. "Don't worry, Erin. I've got you. She won't lay a hand on you."

He turned around and shot Tracy another furious look. "You've been badmouthing Erin for years, yet you're the one who started this whole mess. What gives you the nerve to pin it on her?"

Tracy skipped debating who was really to blame. She just fixed her intense stare on Erin. "Those paparazzi confessed that you were the one who opened the door for them at the Jackman Villa. If you have dirty plans, take them out on me. Why drag Grandpa into this?"

Her accusation drew everyone's eyes to Erin. She shook her head quickly. "No, that's a lie. They

tricked me too.

"They told me they were here to interview someone else, but they got lost in the neighborhood. So they knocked on the door to get directions. The second I opened the door, they shoved right in. I was alone and couldn't hold them back. They even hit me with their

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cameras. It hurts like crazy."

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Tears poured down her cheeks as she clutched her chest and wobbled on her feet. The sight tugged at everyone's heartstrings.

Liam rose from his spot on the floor. He couldn't stop his brow from furrowing at her story.

What a lousy excuse. How on earth could

anyone fall for that?

While that thought ran through his head, he caught Norris scowling at Tracy. "See? Erin got played by them just like anyone else. She's not to blame at all."

Liam's head snapped up. He noticed that beyond Norris, everyone else wore the same trusting look toward Erin. The whole thing hit him as totally ridiculous.

Sure, he would never question Erin himself. But that explanation was full of holes. Didn't it seem off to anyone else?

Tracy didn't bat an eye at how they reacted.

In their eyes, even if Erin committed murder she would still get away with it. All she had to do was bat her lashes and say, "It wasn't me," and they'd swallow it whole.

Deep down, Tracy saw the connections as plain as day. From those early snapshots to the paparazzi barging in and Franklin's fall, every piece pointed straight at Erin.

If Franklin didn't pull through, she vowed to end Erin for good.

Even if it meant dragging herself down.

Andrew saw Tracy still eyeing Erin with deadly intent. He stormed over and clamped onto her

arm.

"You played dumb last time and slipped away with those pictures. Don't count on pulling that stunt again."

He barely got the words out before Tracy's knees buckled. She started slumping down without control.

Her head injuries had already left her woozy and off-balance. Norris's shove made her smack it again. The only thing keeping her upright was fretting over Franklin—otherwise, she would have blacked out ages ago.

She had propped her full weight against the wall to stay standing.

Chapter 212 You're Not Alone

Andrew's yank pulled away her support, leaving her teetering on the brink of collapse.

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Andrew reached out on reflex to steady her. But before he could, a hand seized his wrist and jerked it away with force.

He staggered back a couple of steps to steady himself. Frowning, he glanced up and spotted Ronald, who had appeared out of nowhere. The man was cradling Tracy gently in his embrace.

Concern etched Ronald's features. His eyes landed on her bloodied scalp, and he froze for a beat. A brutal spark lit in his gaze.

Tracy blinked in confusion at first. Then, recognizing him, a weight lifted from her heart.

Her words came out rough. "What brings you here?"

Truth was, after that rough night, Ronald couldn't shake his worry that the Jackmans might mistreat Tracy. So he had kept tabs on the place.

Seeing her in such a mess, he regretted showing up late.

He pushed down the fury bubbling inside and flashed the warm grin she always loved. "Easy now. I'm with you. You are not alone."

His eyes scanned the crowd slowly, one face at a time. It was like he aimed to etch their expressions into his memory forever.

Chapter 213 Under My Guard

Chapter 213 Under My Guard

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Whatever mistreatment these folks had dished out to Tracy, Ronald vowed to hit them back tenfold—no, a thousand times harder.

He pulled his eyes away and helped Tracy up carefully. “Tracy, come on, let’s get your wound treated first.”

Tracy just shook her head. She stayed silent, but her eyes remained glued to the operating room door.

Ronald

got the

message. He realized no talking would sway her, so he dropped it.

He guided her to a nearby seat, flagged down a nurse for some bandages and ointment, and took care of her injuries himself.

All the while, he didn’t spare a word for the Jackman family. After that first icy stare, he treated them like they were invisible.

The group watched Tracy—who, moments ago, had been wild and uncontrollable—now sitting still, eerily calm, as Ronald tended to her wounds. An odd unease settled over them. It was as if something precious had been taken away from them.

Norris felt it the most.

He remembered too clearly how Tracy despised strangers getting too close.

Through the years, nobody but the Jackman family and he had ever been allowed to go near her.

Yet here she was, letting this other guy’s fingers graze her skin softly, without a hint of revulsion.

Norris’s face tightened. His stare bored into Ronald’s hands on her, like he might lunge at any

instant.

Erin caught the shift in him first. Tracing his line of sight, her own features contorted in anger.

What was going on? *Ever since Tracy’s return, her luck had tanked completely.*

Back when they sent Tracy off to Angelic Etiquette Academy, Erin should have made sure she stayed caged there for good.

Erin put on a fake grin and grabbed Norris's hand to snap him back. "Norris, I'm so scared."

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Norris murmured reassurances right away. Just like that, those jealous sparks in his head fizzled out.

The rest of the Jackman family huddled close, doting on Erin with endless care. They fretted over her more than over Franklin, who was still under the knife. Some even suggested getting a doctor to look her over immediately.

Liam hung back in the corner, lost in a fog, skipping the fuss.

He eyed Erin in the middle of the crowd, everyone checking on her. Then his gaze shifted to Tracy, staring blankly at the operating room doors. For once, the lopsided treatment hit him

square.

Until now, he had figured they treated both girls fairly. He blamed Tracy for being grabby, always chasing what Erin had.

But the favoritism screamed loud and clear.

They were both part of the Jackmans, and Tracy was the one who had grown up with them since childhood, so why did they favor Erin more?

Liam's mind spun in chaos, as if opposing forces were tearing at his thoughts, threatening to rip him in half.

A pounding headache struck suddenly. He braced against the wall to keep from collapsing.

Right then, the operating room doors swung open.

Tracy bolted up first. "Doctor, how's my grandpa doing?" she asked, voice shaking.

The doctor tugged off his mask. “The injury to Mr. Franklin’s head isn’t severe, but given his age and already fragile condition, the impact took a serious toll.

“We’ve done everything we can, but whether he pulls through now depends on his will to live.”

Tracy sagged, a freezing terror gripping her whole body.

Ronald, trailing right behind, steadied her. He soothed her softly. “Take it easy, Tracy. Mr. Franklin’s a tough one. I bet he’ll come through.”

The others took the update hard but not like Tracy. Deep down, they sighed in relief.

They had braced for the worst, even the possibility that Franklin hadn’t survived.

That would have thrown the business into total chaos.

Chapter 213 Under My Guard

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Erin stood out as the one fuming inside, no relief in sight.

Why can't that old geezer just drop dead?

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She hid her scowl and beamed brightly. “Oh, what a relief that Grandpa’s stable. If he’d died right before my eyes, I’d carry that guilt forever.

“Doctor, may I go in to see him? I won’t settle until I lay eyes on him myself.”

“No!”

Tracy cut in sharply before the doctor could reply.

She gripped Ronald’s arm for balance. Her cold eyes raked over the others around her.

“Until Grandpa wakes up, nobody gets close—not a single one of you.”

Benjamin’s expression darkened, and the doctor’s raised brow only added fuel to the fire. “You ungrateful brat, what makes you think you’re the one calling the shots?”

“Grandpa has already handed all his people over to me, and now they only follow my orders.”

Tracy brushed off his outburst. She turned straight to Franklin’s guards and commanded them to take turns keeping watch around the clock on his room. Nobody but approved doctors and nurses could step foot inside.

All of Franklin’s medications had to be thoroughly inspected before they were allowed to cross the threshold.

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Chapter 214 The Night Visitor

Chapter 214 The Night Visitor

“You ... you...”

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Benjamin was shocked that she would defy him. He shook with anger, pointing at her for a long time, but no words came out.

Tracy paid him no attention. She personally watched the doctors move Franklin to the ICU. Only then did she feel calm.

She had kept going on sheer willpower. Now that she could relax, her body gave out. Her vision went black, and she fainted.

When she woke up, Tracy felt like her body had been torn apart, aching all over.

Her head throbbed like it was splitting open.

But right away, she wanted to check on Franklin. Ronald quickly held her back.

“There are guards watching over Mr. Franklin at all times, and I’m keeping an eye on things too. If anything happens, I’ll definitely tell you. So stay in bed and rest.”

His voice sounded helpless and a little angry. “Running around with that big cut on your head. CeeCee, have I been spoiling you too much by making sure you eat three meals a day?”

It was the first time he’d ever said “CeeCee” in a mean way. But it made her smile inwardly. “Are you angry?”

Ronald pouted and looked away.

His reaction made Tracy burst out laughing, but the movement tugged at the wound on her head, making her hiss in pain.

Ronald leaned over quickly, looking worried. “What happened?”

He examined her closely. When he saw that it was just the pulling at her wound—nothing more serious—he relaxed.

He was about to speak, but she beat him to it. “Thanks. Sorry I made you worry.”

Her heart was only closed off to the Jackmans and those filled with malice—not to the entire world.

She knew Ronald was worried about her.

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Her simple “thanks” made Ronald—still carrying some anger in his heart—suddenly pause.

When he first met Tracy, although she seemed brimming with energy, she was so thin and fragile that it seemed like a breeze could blow her away.

To help Tracy recover, he had put so much thought into her three daily meals. Now that she finally had some color back in her cheeks, she looked just as she had a few days ago—before returning to the Jackman Villa and ending up a mess again. Of course, he was angry.

But he knew this wasn’t Tracy’s fault, just like when he had been at the Wests—there were many things beyond his control.

If he was going to blame anyone, it should be those those brainless idiots in the Jackmans!

Ronald lowered his gaze to hide the darkness in his eyes and muttered, "If you know I'm worried, then rest well. I'm keeping an eye on Mr. Franklin's situation. I've already contacted the most renowned doctor in this field in Jezelton, and he's on his way.

"Wait until you've recovered and Mr. Franklin is out of the ICU. It won't be too late to see him then."

Watching his pouty expression, Tracy finally felt her constantly tense heart relax.

The most renowned doctor in Jezelton wasn't easy to find—even the Jackmans didn't necessarily have that kind of pull, but Ronald could make it happen.

Tracy wasn't sure if this would cause trouble for Ronald, but with Franklin's life at stake, she couldn't refuse.

She knew Ronald didn't like hearing her say thank you, so she obediently lay back down on the bed.

"Okay, I'll listen to you."

Since it was a head injury, Tracy fell into a deep sleep not long after lying down.

Later, when she was finally able to get out of bed and walk around a bit, the first thing she did was see Franklin.

Franklin had passed the critical phase but was still unconscious.

During this time, Tracy maintained strict security, preventing anyone from getting close. Even doctors and nurses had to be vetted before being allowed in.

The Jackman family members showed up several times. They wanted to go in and see

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Franklin, but they were all stopped by the bodyguards at the door.

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They angrily went to find Tracy, only to be blocked by the bodyguards Ronald had arranged.

This infuriated the Jackmans so much that they no longer cared about keeping up appearances. They stood at the door, cursing Tracy repeatedly, yet they still couldn't even catch a glimpse of her.

In the end, they had no choice but to give up. Outside, they were busy dealing with the explosive rumors and gossip—waiting for Franklin to wake up so they could finally deal with Tracy.

Everyone was silently waiting for Franklin to wake up, except for one person who grew more anxious with each passing day.

According to Erin's plan, Franklin should have been killed by the falling camera equipment that very day. Everyone would blame Tracy, leaving her consumed by guilt over his death and overwhelmed by the rumors—never able to recover.

Only by completely crushing Tracy, the female lead, and making sure she could never get back up, could Erin safely seize everything and secure her position.

But she hadn't expected that old geezer to be so hard to kill. Because of what had happened, those paparazzi didn't dare act recklessly anymore, and the heat was gradually being suppressed by the Jackmans.

Seeing her plan about to fail completely, Erin decided to take more drastic measures.

As long as she could kill that old geezer, without her backer, Tracy would have no place left to stand within the Jackmans!

That night, everything was quiet.

After everyone had fallen asleep, Erin drove alone to the hospital.

Franklin's hospital room was on a separate floor, guarded by bodyguards at the door and monitored by surveillance cameras covering every angle—leaving no blind spots.

Erin gave the surveillance cameras a brief glance and murmured, "I'll leave the monitoring to you."

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Chapter 215 Under a Spell

Erin headed straight for the hospital room.

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The bodyguard lifted his hand to block her. “Ms. Jackman, no one gets in here except doctors and nurses.”

Erin glanced up, her eyes filling with tears right away. “I know Tracy ordered you to keep everyone out, but I’m so worried about Grandpa.

“After my adoptive parents passed away, they sent me to an orphanage. All my life, I’ve never had a real family or friends. So when I learned I was the Jackmans’ daughter, it felt like a dream come true.

“I figured all those 18 years of hardship were leading to having a family who would love me. Even if Grandpa doesn’t like me because he pities Tracy, I still worked hard to earn his approval.”

Tears rolled down her cheeks as she reached out carefully and tugged lightly at the

bodyguard’s sleeve. “Please, just let me go in and see Grandpa. Even if it’s just for one look. I’m begging you.”

Her words carried so much genuine emotion that anyone would be touched.

But no matter how bad he felt for her, the bodyguard’s orders stopped him from bending just for a sad story. “Sorry, Ms. Jackman, you can’t...

Before he could finish, he caught sight of the tears in Erin’s eyes and froze. It felt like his heartstrings were being pulled hard.

He stared into her teary eyes. His once stern look softened bit by bit, like he was hypnotized. His raised hand dropped slowly.

Erin smiled through her tears, her face beaming with gratitude. “Thank you, sir. Don’t worry, I’ll keep this between us and won’t breathe a word to Tracy.”

She winked at him playfully, then pushed open the door and stepped inside.

The second the door clicked shut, her sweet, playful grin twisted into something cold and evil.

The bodyguard had no clue. He smiled without thinking as he gazed at her back, like she was his greatest treasure.

How

could there be such a kind-hearted, innocent, and pure girl in this world?

Chapter 215 Under a Spell

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The night outside was dark as ink.

On the white hospital bed, Tracy suddenly woke up, bolting upright as if escaping a bad dream.

She clutched her chest where her heart pounded, gasping for air.

Ronald, dozing on the cot next to her, stirred at the same moment. He flipped on the light and hurried to her side.

He saw sweat beading on her forehead and asked with concern. "Did you have a nightmare?"

Tracy shook her head.

She couldn't explain it, but a wave of worry hit her.

She grabbed Ronald's hand suddenly. "I have to go see Grandpa."

Ronald glanced at the clock. It was just after 3 a.m., with dawn still far away.

He knew Tracy had been on edge about Franklin these last few days. But at this time of night ...

Ronald considered urging her to rest and wait for morning, but the fear in her eyes changed his mind.

Since it was the same building and not far, a quick check would help calm her down.

But right as they stepped out of the room, a nurse rushed up in a frenzy. "Mr. Franklin is in bad shape!"

Boom!

Tracy's mind reeled like a bomb had gone off. Her body wobbled, and Ronald caught her fast to keep her steady,

Before he could say anything to soothe her, Tracy pushed his hand away and staggered back,

then broke into a run.

By the time Tracy got there, they had wheeled Franklin into the operating room for emergency care. The bodyguard on duty that night stood by the door, his face white as a sheet.

When he spotted Tracy, he dropped his head in shame. "Ms. Tracy..."

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Tracy's face turned stone cold. "What went wrong?"

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She fought to stay calm, but her fists clenched so tightly that her nails dug into her skin.

Ronald noticed and quickly took hold of her hands, letting her squeeze his instead—gently redirecting her grip.

The bodyguard's face stayed pale, heavy with regret. "It was Ms. Jackman. She went into the room, and less than an hour later, Mr. Franklin had an emergency."

Tracy shook with rage. She had expected this, but it still made her blood boil. "I told you flat out not to let anyone near Grandpa. Why did you let her in?"

This tough bodyguard, who wouldn't flinch with a gun to his head, was now shaking in his boots. "I don't know what came over me. It felt like I was under a spell. I just let her through."

Looking back, he wished he could slap himself.

Erin... it was *Erin again!*

Tracy's face darkened like a thundercloud. Her killer glare terrified the bodyguard, like she might strike any second.

Luckily, Tracy held back. She just stared at the operating room doors, gripping Ronald's hands tighter, her body stiff as a board.

Dear Lord, forget *my past pain or future troubles*. *I'd give up everything I have—* just please, keep Grandpa safe.

Tracy had never felt time pass so slowly. Every second felt like a century,

Chapter 216 We Did Everything We Could

Chapter 216 We Did Everything We Could

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The Jackmans had people watching Franklin's status at the hospital, too. So when trouble hit, they got word right away and hurried over.

They barely got there before Benjamin started yelling. "What on earth happened? He got through the worst part, so why did things go south? Tracy, how were you looking after Grandpa?"

Andrew adjusted his glasses, like always. "You kept everyone away from Grandpa on purpose to make a point. Now look what happened to him. Happy now?"

Ronald meant to ignore these folks, but their nonsense pushed him over the edge. "Does the entire Jackman family have rocks for brains?"

"If you think Tracy's just doing all this for attention, then you're completely delusional."

Ronald's harsh comeback made Andrew, who thought he was always cool-headed, lose it. His face contorted in fury. "You ... who are you, anyway? What gives you the right to talk here?"

He glared at Ronald like he could murder him with a look.

Ronald sneered openly and was about to fire back when Tracy snapped out of it.

She turned toward Erin. While everyone focused on Ronald and Andrew, she charged forward.

Slap!

She put all her force into that slap, knocking Erin sideways until her head smacked against the wall.

“Ah! Erin, are you all right?”

Daphne screamed in shock, shot Tracy a furious look, and rushed to check on Erin, full of

worry.

That move was like tossing gas on Andrew’s fire,

“Tracy, how long are you gonna keep this up?”

He turned around, yanked Tracy by the arm, and swung his other hand to strike her.

But before it landed, someone seized his wrist and shoved him back, hard.

Chapter 216 We Did Everything We Could

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Andrew stumbled back a few steps. Once steady, he saw Ronald shielding Tracy, eyeing him with cold caution.

“Don’t you dare lay a finger on her!”

His dark eyes locked on Andrew like a bottomless pit brimming with deadly intent.

Even Andrew, with his years in power, felt a chill. It was like a wild animal had him in its sights.

Amid the heavy tension, Tracy kept her eyes fixed on Erin. “What did you do *to* Grandpa?”

Her question drew confused stares toward Erin.

Erin clutched her face pitifully. She didn’t seem afraid of the accusation—only hurt.

“Tracy, I have no idea what you mean.

“These past few days, I’ve stayed home with Mom the whole time. I never stepped out, let alone came here. Why do you always point the finger at me?”

“I know you’ve never liked me, but I’m Grandpa’s real granddaughter. How could I ever harm him?”

Tears welled in her eyes, as if she had been badly wronged. It made the Jackman family feel awful for her.

But Tracy and Ronald stood stone-faced, seeing her act as nothing more than a sad joke.

The pale-faced bodyguard didn't buy it either.

He jumped in to point her out. "You did come to the hospital! Early this morning, around dawn, you begged me to let you see Mr. Franklin. You sounded so honest and sad that I gave in."

His assured tone made the others doubt Erin.

Erin maintained her composure, looking genuinely baffled by the accusation. "I didn't. After I went to bed last night, I stayed put. I never came here at all.

"I have no grudge against you. I don't even know you. Why would you falsely accuse me?" She burst into tears.

The bodyguard froze.

It was the same tear-streaked, fragile face that had once stirred his pity, but now it sent only a cold shudder through him.

Chapter 216 We Did Everything We Could

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As the Jackman family fussed over Erin with pity and shot him angry, doubtful looks, the bodyguard panicked. "I'm not lying. Check the surveillance footage. It really was her."

But before he could say more, the operating room door swung open. All eyes turned toward it.

Tracy dropped the chase with Erin and rushed over. "Doctor, how's my Grandpa? Is he ..."

She froze, too scared to speak. Her heart hung by a thread.

But her silence didn't stop the doctor from speaking.

He looked at the pale girl with a bandaged head and hopeful eyes, then sighed. "I'm did everything we could."

sorry. We

Right then, the tight string in her heart snapped. Her mind went blank with a sudden boom.

Darkness rushed in from everywhere, engulfing her completely.

Chapter 217 No Evidence Found

Chapter 217 No Evidence Found

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Right before she blacked out, Tracy caught Ronald's frantic yell of "CeeCee" just as everything

went silent.

Tracy tumbled into a deep void, swallowed whole by shadows.

Suddenly, memories flooded back from her early days at Angelic Etiquette Academy.

She'd grown up spoiled and cherished, so when the Jackmans turned cold after Erin returned, she figured that rejection was rock bottom. Her whole life felt shattered.

But she quickly learned that being treated like dirt on the street hurt a lot more.

Going hungry or being overlooked seemed like a vacation compared to the nightmare the "students" endured at Angelic Etiquette Academy.

Beatings, verbal abuse, threats, intimidation—that was the true pit of despair.

More than once, she believed she wouldn't make it. In those breaking moments, ending it all seemed like the only relief.

Yet every time, thoughts of Franklin pulled her through—the man who shielded her like a precious gem, no matter how others shunned her, always staying true.

Franklin would always say, "Don't worry, Tracy. No matter what anyone else does, you'll always have me by your side.

"I'll stand right behind you forever, ready to catch you, guard you. I'll be your rock and your shield.

"If you're worn out or frightened, lean on me. Whatever storm comes, I'll take care of it."

Clinging to Franklin's promises, she powered through two tough years at Angelic Etiquette Academy. Back home, she swallowed her bitterness toward the Jackmans just to remain close to Grandpa.

Nothing else mattered. She only wanted to stay near Franklin and keep an eye on him.

But now, Grandpa was gone for good.

Hot tears streamed down her cheeks as Tracy rested on the hospital bed, eyes shut tight. She wept without a sound.

Chapter 217 No Evidence Found

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Ronald had just breathed easier seeing her awake, but now his chest tightened with pain.

He grabbed a tissue, gently dabbing her tears, then settled by the bed to keep her company.

Tracy kept her eyes closed, but she sensed it was him.

She had to speak up, her voice rough. "Ronald, Grandpa's gone forever."

Ronald parted his lips, but words failed him. He was usually quick with sharp comebacks in any fight, yet now he drew a blank.

He'd never known the warmth of a family member who loved him unconditionally. He'd never felt the sting of losing a loved one, so comforting her felt impossible.

Instead, he took her hand, patting it lightly, like a wordless promise that he hadn't left her side.

After a while, Tracy pulled herself together and looked up.

Her face hadn't changed, but Ronald saw the chill in her—like she'd turned to stone, her gaze empty and lifeless.

It broke his heart.

Tracy propped herself up and asked, "How long was I unconscious?"

“Two days,” Ronald replied, passing her the warm water he’d kept nearby, having noticed the rasp in her voice.

Tracy accepted it without a fuss.

She took a sip to ease her throat, then pressed on. “Did you look at the surveillance footage?”

She knew him well—he’d likely started digging the moment she went down.

The cameras covered every inch of the floor, and with both Erin and the guard spinning their own tales, the footage would reveal who was lying.

Ronald had indeed gotten started, but he’d assumed Tracy would be lost in sorrow for days, so he left the investigation files behind.

She proved tougher than he’d imagined.

Although he hadn’t brought the investigation files, Ronald was very clear about the current progress. “The surveillance has been checked, and there’s no sign of Erin in it. I also had professionals look at it, and they found no evidence of the footage being tampered with.

Chapter 217 No Evidence Found

“It seems the guard made it up, but his record is spotless—nothing shady.”

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These guards were handpicked by Walter and had protected Franklin for six or seven years. They were solid and unlikely to slip up.

The investigation had hit a dead end, and it seemed that no matter who they looked into, they couldn’t find anything suspicious.

Tracy hadn’t expected this result either.

But she absolutely refused to believe that Erin was innocent.

The whole thing had started with those photos circulating online, and those photos were connected to Tom, which definitely tied back to Erin!

Tracy asked, “Did you find out where Erin was that night?”

Knowing she'd hold onto her doubts, Ronald explained, "The Jackman Villa cameras confirm she stayed put, and the hospital logs show no trace of her coming or going. But I'm still scanning the routes she might have taken."

It was an enormous amount of work, so there hadn't been any new progress yet.

Tracy knew this wasn't an easy task.

No matter what Erin did, she always covered her tracks too cleanly. Tracy knew it would be hard to investigate her, but she would never give up.

The two were discussing where to begin their investigation when an uninvited guest appeared in the hospital room.

Chapter 218 Start with Tom

Chapter 218 Start with Tom

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Liam stood somewhat awkwardly in the hospital room, a basket of fruit and a bouquet in his hands.

After all these years of knowing him, Tracy had never seen the normally hotheaded and blunt Liam act this way.

She had no interest in figuring out his angle, though. She simply turned her head away with a frosty glare.

Ronald stood up and headed to the door. "What are you doing here?"

In the past, Liam would've blown up and started yelling the second he spotted Ronald. Today, though, he remained polite and subdued. "I came to check on my sis ...

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"She's not your sister. Your sister's at the Jackman Villa," Ronald snapped, cutting him off cold. "Tracy's been hurt for days now, and you're just showing up? Doesn't that strike you as absurd?"

Liam fumed over the interruption, but he had no comeback.

Tracy had been injured alongside Franklin, and now that Franklin was already gone indeed ridiculous for Liam to only come visit now.

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But if he didn't come and get these questions answered, those doubts would wrap around his mind like a curse, making him absent-minded in everything he did and unable to sleep well.

Ronald ignored whatever was swirling in his head and reached to shut the door. "You're not welcome here. Don't bother coming back."

"Hold on!" Liam jammed his foot in the closing door and blurted out, "I've got something to say about Grandpa."

Sure enough, Ronald paused and turned to look at the person on the hospital bed.

Seeing Tracy's expression soften, Liam breathed a sigh of relief and quickly slipped inside.

He placed the flowers and fruit on the table and was about to call out, "Tracy," but swallowed the greeting when he saw Tracy's cold expression.

"How are you feeling? Are you better?"

Tracy wasn't interested in small talk. "What do you want to say?"

Chapter 218 Start with Tom

In the past, faced with her attitude, Liam would've already been furious.

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But lately, he didn't know why—every time he faced Tracy, he felt guilty, and his attitude became especially gentle, just like it had been before Erin returned to the Jackmans.

Knowing Tracy was impatient, he didn't beat around the bush. "Grandpa's funeral is scheduled for tomorrow, and Dad asked me to remind you to remember to attend.

"Andrew thinks there will definitely be a lot of reporters waiting outside the villa estate, so it would be best if you could leave from the Jackman Villa with everyone else.

“Although the photo issue has been resolved, there are still some rumors going around, and Andrew wants to clarify things at tomorrow’s funeral. It would be easier to handle if you’re there.”

Even knowing Franklin was gone, the word “funeral” hit Tracy like a punch to the gut.

She would definitely attend—she didn’t want Franklin to leave with his reputation tarnished— so she didn’t refuse the Jackmans’ arrangement. “I’ll return to the Jackman Villa tonight.”

When she spoke, she didn’t look at Liam, her attitude clearly unwelcoming.

If Liam had any sense, he would’ve taken the initiative to leave at this point, but he had volunteered *to* come deliver this message to Tracy because he obviously had other motives. He just hesitated, unsure how to bring it up.

Ronald frowned and walked over. “Mr. Liam, do you have anything else?”

“I ...”

Liam looked at Tracy and hesitated for a long time before finally speaking. “I wanted to ask about the photos. Why do you suspect Erin?”

Tracy’s gaze finally fell on him for the first time since he had entered the room, seeming both mocking and appraising. “Then why do you suspect her?”

“I don’t!” Liam denied it quickly and even repeated it for emphasis. “How could I possibly suspect Erin?”

Tracy’s expression remained calm, but her eyes looked as if they wanted to see right through him. “If you didn’t suspect her, you wouldn’t be asking me this.”

“I ... ”

Liam was suddenly speechless.

Chapter 218 Start with Tom

This was exactly why he had been so anxious lately that he couldn’t even sleep well.

Tracy was truly surprised that he would ever have a day when he doubted Erin.

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She had thought the Jackmans had all become Erin's most devout believers, and even if someone's faith in Erin were to falter someday, she never would have thought that be the most impulsive and brainless of them all—Liam.

Still, having someone doubt Erin was a good thing for her.

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Tracy let out a cold laugh. "If you want to know the truth, you might as well investigate it yourself, so it won't become another case of me 'slandering Erin' when it comes out of my mouth."

It was always like this. No matter how solid the evidence she presented, it could never compare to a single tear from Erin in the eyes of the Jackmans.

Since they didn't trust her anyway, it was better to let him investigate on his own.

Tracy didn't mind giving him a hint. "If you want to investigate the source of those photos, you might as well start with that guy Tom."

"Tom? Who?" Liam felt the name sounded familiar but couldn't remember for a moment.

It wasn't until Tracy reminded him that he remembered Tom was the account holder Walter had investigated, the one provided by the kidnapers who had abducted Erin.

Connecting these two incidents, Liam felt inexplicably panicked, sensing that the results of his investigation might not be what he wanted to hear.

But the more he suspected, the more determined he became to get to the bottom of it.

With Liam now investigating the photo incident, Tracy was no longer in a rush to find the evidence herself.

Chapter 219 When Mourning Becomes Marketing

Chapter 219 When Mourning Becomes Marketing

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When the evidence came from Liam rather than from Erin herself, it appeared far more credible.

She didn't have the energy to worry about other things right now. She just wanted to send Franklin off on his final journey.

So that evening, she had Ronald take her back to the Jackman Villa, and the next morning, she went to the funeral home with the Jackmans.

This was the first time since Tracy returned from Angelic Etiquette Academy that she had peacefully coexisted with the Jackmans for the same purpose.

Franklin's funeral was held with great fanfare. Not only did all the influential figures from Cloudville attend, but business partners from other cities who had dealings with the Jackmans

also came.

As CEO of Jackman Enterprise, Andrew naturally took responsibility for going on stage to deliver the eulogy in front of all the reporters and media.

After finishing the eulogy, Andrew also brought up another important purpose of the day. "Regarding the rumors that have been circulating online recently about my grandfather and my sister Tracy,

I believe everyone has heard about them.

Jackman Enterprise has not issued any statement about this before because we didn't want to lower ourselves to address such nonsense, but we didn't expect some people to become more and more outrageous, even breaking into our home and causing my grandfather to ...

Andrew's voice became somewhat choked up.

As the eldest son of the family, Andrew had been personally taught by Franklin until his teens, so aside from Tracy, he could be said to have had the closest relationship with Franklin in the entire Jackman family.

So Franklin's death naturally made him very sad as well.

After composing himself slightly, Andrew spoke again," Taking this opportunity today, I solemnly tell everyone that this matter is purely someone's deliberate fabrication and frame- up, and we have already reported it to the police.

"We know many people were just following the crowd and reposting without actually understanding the truth, so we have decided to sue only the few media outlets that originally spread the photos and fabricated the facts.

Chapter 219 When Mourning Becomes Marketing

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“They have all contacted Jackman Enterprise’s legal department privately and admitted they were also deceived—all of this was orchestrated by our business rivals.”

When Andrew finished speaking, there was an uproar below the stage.

Tracy, who had been hanging her head, suddenly looked up, her previously deathly still face now full of shock and anger.

She had thought that, for the sake of saving face, the Jackmans might choose to quickly cover this matter up without investigating thoroughly, and even if they traced it back to Erin, they wouldn’t easily believe it.

But she never imagined they would actually use this incident to throw dirt on their rivals, especially at Franklin’s funeral.

Tracy glanced toward the media reporters clustered below the stage—all of them jostling and shouting questions at Andrew, demanding answers about these mysterious “business rivals” he’d referenced.

Of course, Andrew wouldn’t say.

If he mentioned names at this point, those companies could immediately send a lawyer’s letter to Jackman Enterprise.

But if it was “dug up” by netizens afterward, then it would have nothing to do with Jackman Enterprise.

After today, all of the Jackmans’ business rivals would probably be too worried to sleep.

Andrew Jackman!

He really was the heir the Jackman family had groomed!

Tracy dug her nails hard into her palms and, after a long while, only managed to suppress the urge to explode with rage on the spot.

She thought the Jackmans’ shamelessness had hit rock bottom, but she hadn’t expected that despite living with them day and night for 18 years, and even living together for several years after Erin returned, she had still underestimated their despicableness.

While all the media reporters were still worked up over Andrew’s words, he dropped another piece of news. “Grandpa dedicated his life’s work to Jackman Enterprise. These

past few years, due to poor health, he hadn't been managing company affairs much, but when he returned to the Jackman Villa, he still asked me about the company's situation.

Chapter 219 When Mourning Becomes Marketing

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"Grandpa discussed with me several times the new project we've been developing in cooperation with Woodward Enterprise. He gave me a lot of valuable advice, and was very excited about the new product, but unfortunately he didn't get to see the new product launch.

"To honor Grandpa and make up for this regret, I guarantee, in my capacity as CEO of Jackman Enterprise that we will donate 50% of the profits from the first batch of new products to establish a charitable foundation in his name."

When Andrew finished speaking, he won a chorus of approval.

Everyone hurried to take photos.

They were busy capturing Andrew's righteous demeanor and praising his filial piety and benevolence.

They also took pictures of the new product in Andrew's hands, focusing on the benefits it promised to bring consumers.

It seemed like everyone had forgotten that today's occasion was supposed to be Franklin's funeral.

Tracy sat off to the side, her gaze fixed intently on the figure standing under the spotlight, gritting her teeth and clenching her hands, not letting go even as blood flowed from her palms.

She had never hated Andrew this much!

She wanted nothing more than to rush forward and tear apart those disgusting and hypocritical faces.

But this was Franklin's funeral.

She knew very well that if she caused a scene, regardless of who won or lost, it would only become a spectacle in the eyes of the outside world.

She wasn't afraid of being laughed at by outsiders, and cared even less if the Jackmans were, but she didn't want Franklin to become gossip fodder when people spoke of him after his

death.

Perhaps anticipating that Tracy would be upset, the Jackmans had arranged for her to sit in the far corner from the start. No one noticed her current distress, and no one noticed when she quietly left.

Chapter 220 She Needed the Truth

After that day, Tracy stopped going to Jackman Villa for a long time.

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It was like she got stuck on one thing, spending day and night digging into Franklin's death and Walter's car crash.

More than once, Ronald caught her silently staring at the photos in Erin's investigation file without saying a word.

The face in the photo looked calm and almost blank, but her eyes burned with a desperate, all-or-nothing kind of hatred.

It was the kind of look that said she'd throw everything away just to drag someone down with her.

Ronald worried a lot about how she was doing. He'd tried to say something a few times, but every time he met her eyes, the words died in his throat. So he stayed right by her side, never leaving her alone.

He'd seen the news from the day of the funeral too. Even though he wasn't there, he could picture exactly how angry and bitter Tracy must've been.

He used to joke that the Jackmans were born without brains, and now he knew he wasn't

wrong.

Maybe even fate had had enough. After pushing herself day and night with barely any sleep and hurting her health, Tracy finally found the smallest clue.

The first thing she'd looked into after Walter's accident was the driver who caused it. But there was nothing suspicious about him.

Then she noticed a tiny note in his file: some donor had called him at the time, offering him

money.

By coincidence, a week before the accident, Erin had been traveling in the same city where that donor lived.

The two facts didn't have any direct link. But maybe because she was still angry about what had happened at the funeral, Tracy wouldn't let go of even the smallest connection.

She kept pulling at that thread—and ended up finding proof that Erin had met the donor face-

to-face.

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Chapter 220 She Needed the Truth

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It was just a casual chat at a restaurant when their tables happened to be next to each other.

But later that same day, the donor asked someone to dig into the driver's background.

After that, he personally made the call offering the money, right before the driver ran a red light in a burst of emotion and crashed into Walter's car.

Tracy didn't believe in coincidences like that—not when Erin was involved.

Without hesitating, she made up her mind. "I'm going to meet this donor."

Tracy was a woman who acted fast. The second she decided, she booked the earliest flight for that same day.

Ronald never tried to stop her from doing what she wanted, but the way she was now made him too uneasy to let her go alone, so he booked a ticket too.

But before they could even leave the house, someone came to see them first.

The man looked like he was in his 40s, with a strict, serious face and not a single hair out of place.

Once he sat down, he handed over a business card and introduced himself. “Ms. Yarwood, I’m Mr. Franklin’s appointed lawyer. He told me to come to you only after his funeral was over.”

Speaking in a professional voice, the lawyer took several documents from his bag and set them neatly on the table as he talked. “These are the properties under Mr. Franklin’s name. Here’s the full balance in his accounts. These are the staff he personally hired and who are now at your command. And these are his 20% shares in Jackman Enterprise ...

“According to Franklin’s will, all of these go to you, Ms. Yarwood. Once you sign, they’ll be legally yours.”

For everything to be this ready so quickly, Franklin must have planned it all far ahead.

Tracy understood that right away. And the heavy, suffocating feelings she’d been holding deep inside for days suddenly pressed hard against the walls she’d built, ready to break through.

The lawyer didn’t rush her. He just set a pen in front of her and gave her Franklin’s last words.

“He said you can be sad about his death, but not for too long—or he’ll worry he can’t rest in peace.

“He said if you don’t want any of this, donate it to an orphanage. Everything should be up to you, just like he always told you before. He only hopes you can live your life happily.”

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Right then, Tracy couldn’t hold it in anymore. Her tears came fast, heavy drops rolling down

her face.

The lawyer stayed seated, still looking professional, but there was a faint flicker of emotion in his eyes.

Ronald sat beside her, saying nothing, just holding her hand tight.

Her falling tears hit the back of his hand, hot as boiling water, burning a hole deep inside his chest.

No one knew how long the silence lasted before Tracy wiped her face, picked up without a word, signed two of the documents.

One was for the 20% shares of Jackman Enterprise.

The other was for Franklin's personal staff, who could now work under her.

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She'd once wanted nothing more than to keep her distance from the Jackmans, swallowing her pride and stepping back again and again. But now, she wasn't stepping back anymore.

She needed the truth about Walter's accident and Franklin's death.